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To Horace with love
and birthday greetings
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The Open Secret

OR

THE BIBLE EXPLAINING ITSELF

BY

HANNAH WHITALL SMITH

Author of "The Christian Secret of a Happy Life," "Frank; the Record of a Happy Life," "Bible Readings on the Old Testament," Etc.

"But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken a[redacted]

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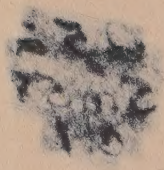

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Introduction.

HOW TO PREPARE BIBLE LESSONS.

For your study of the Bible you require four things:

I. A Bible with references, if possible.

II. A complete Cruden's, or Young's "Analytical Concordance."

III. A blank-book that can be ruled in columns.

IV. An undisturbed desk or table, where you can keep the above three things, with pen and ink, always ready.

Having provided these few necessary things, proceed as follows:

I. Commit yourself, in a few words, to the Lord, asking for light and guidance, and expecting to receive them.

II. Choose a subject appropriate to the occasion.

III. Find in the Concordance all the words referring to this subject, and select from among the texts given, such as seem to you best to elucidate it, noting them down under their appropriate Headings in your blank-book.

IV. Read over these selected texts carefully, and make a list of the most striking on a separate piece of paper, putting them in the order that will best develop the lesson. Begin this list with a familiar text, and gradually progress to those not so well known, letting each successive text develop the subject a little more clearly than the last. Close the list, if possible, with some practical instance from Bible

history, or some typical illustration.

V. Having thus prepared your list, open your Bible at the first text, and on the margin beside it write the reference to the second text on your list. Turn to this second one, and write beside it the reference to the third. Turn to the third, and write beside it the reference to the fourth. And so on through the whole list. Finally, refer back to your foundation text, and sum the subject all up.

VI. On a blank page at the end of your Bible, write down an index of all the subjects you have thus studied, with a reference at each to the first text on your list concerning that subject. If you have no blank leaves at the end of your Bible, gum the edge of a half sheet of note paper and fasten it in.

VII. If you prefer it, you may write a list of all your chain of texts on the margin beside the first text, so as to have them all before you at once to choose from.

VIII. By this plan you will have a complete chain of texts on any given subject running all through your Bible itself, each verse referring you to the next one you wish to read, without having the trouble of loose slips of paper to embarrass you. Also, having once studied out a subject, you have it all ready for any future use; and by turning to your index list, you can at a moment's notice open your Bible at the foundation text, and can then turn to one text after another through the whole course of your lesson, without hesitation or embarrassment.

HANNAH WHITALL SMITH,

GERMANTOWN, PA.

BIBLE READINGS.

I.

SUBJECT—OUR SAVIOUR.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—*And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*—Luke 2:10, 11.

Notice that it is a "Saviour," not a Helper; that is, One who saves, not merely One who offers to help us save ourselves; but One who knows our helplessness, and who therefore declared that He had come to seek and to save.

"For I am with thee to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the Lord."—Jer. 15:20.

"For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost."—Matt. 18:11.

Who is this Saviour?

"For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

"I, even I, am the Lord, and beside Me there is no Saviour."—Isaiah 43:3, 11.

"And there is no God else beside Me, a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me. Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."—Isaiah 45:21,22.

The God who created us, is the God who saves us. Not another God, for there is none beside Him, but the very God our Creator Himself. Some are apt to think of our Creator and our Saviour as two Gods, with interests which are not

identical. But we are told as plainly as words can tell it, that the Creator is also the Saviour, and there is "none beside."

"To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."—Jude: 25.

"And thou shalt know that I, the Lord, am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."—Isa. 60:16.

"For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."—I Tim. 4:10.

"And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."—I Tim. 3:16.

Since, therefore, it is God, the Almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, who is our Saviour, there can be no question about His ability to save us, and we may rest our cases in His care without an anxiety or a fear.

From what does He save us?

I. He saves us from our *sins.*

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins."—Matt. 1:21.

"Unto you first, God having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."—Acts 3:26.

"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."—Titus 2:14.

II. He saves us from our *temptations.*

"For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."—Heb. 2:18.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."—I Cor. 10:13.

III. He saves us from our *cares.*

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. —I Peter 5:7.

"Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.—Phil. 4:6,7.

IV. He saves us from our *troubles.*

"Thou art my hiding-place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."—Ps. 32:7.

V. He saves us from our *bondage* to sin and the devil.

"Thus saith the Lord * * * For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder."—Nahum 1:13.

"O, Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thy handmaid: Thou hast loosed my bonds."—Ps. 116:16.

VI. He saves us from our *enemies.*

"As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He sware to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life."—Luke 1:70-75.

VII. He saves us from our *fears.*

"I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."—Ps. 34:4.

"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday."—Ps. 91:5, 6.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself, likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."—Heb. 2:14, 15.

This does not mean that we shall have no sins to tempt us, no cares to burden us, no enemies to

attack us, no sorrows to grieve us; but that out of them all, and in them all, we shall be saved with an interior salvation that will make us "more than conquerors" continually.

Whom does He save?

He saves those who are lost.

"For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—Luke 19:10.

"For thus saith the Lord God; Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick."—Ezek. 34:11, 12, 16.

"And He spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?"—Luke 15:3,4.

He saves sinners, bad people who feel themselves to be unworthy.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."—I Tim. 1:15.

"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."—Luke 5:32.

"And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other, for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."—Luke 18:9-14.

He saves the helpless.

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." — II Cor. 12:9.

"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength."—Isaiah 40:29.

He saves the sick.

"But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." —Matt. 9:12.

He saves the world.

"And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."—I John 2:2.

"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."—I John 4:14.

"Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."—John 4:42.

How did He announce His own mission when on earth?

"And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."—Luke 4:16-21.

When does He save?

He saves NOW.

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation."—II Cor. 6:2.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."—Ps. 44:1.

How does He save?

By His own mighty power, and out of His own heart of love and mercy.

"For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favor unto them."—Ps. 44:3.

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done; but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."—Titus iii:5.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."—Eph. 2:8,9.

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."—Exodus 14:13,14.

Why does He save us?

Because He loves us.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3:16.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."—I John 4:9.

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."—II Tim. 1:9,10.

Also, He saves us in order to show forth to the universe the exceeding riches of His grace, and of His wisdom and His power.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come He

might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."—Eph. 2:4–7.

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God."—Eph. 3:10.

What is our part in this salvation?

I. Surrender; II. Trust; III. Obedience.

I. Surrender.

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."—James 4:7.

"O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come."—Ps. 65:2.

"Incline your ear, and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."—Isa. 55:3.

"Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. 11:28.

"I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause."—Job 5:8.

"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."—Isa. 55:6,7.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."—II. Cor. 6:17,18.

"Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing as unto a faithful Creator."—I Pet. 4:19.

II. Trust.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."—Heb. 11:6.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."—Ps. 37:5.

"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen, and stand upright."—Ps. 20:7,8.

"And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him."—Ps. 37:40.

"They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which can not be removed, but abideth for ever."—Ps. 125:1.

"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."—Rom. 10:8–13.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."—John 3:14,15.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life."—John 6:47.

"And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."—John 6:40.

"To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."—Acts 10:43.

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that though this man is preaching unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."—Acts 13:38, 39.

III. Obedience.

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness."—Rom. 6:16.

"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell

not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."—Matt. 7:21–27.

"But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."—James 1:22.

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."—James 2:14, 17, 26.

No one of these three things—surrender, trust, or obedience, will do without the others. We must not only yield ourselves up utterly to God, but we must also trust Him, and we must furthermore walk in obedience to Him. I believe myself that it is impossible to do one fully without doing the others also, for they are inseparably connected in the very nature of things. We can not yield unless we trust, and we can not trust unless we both yield and obey. A fire without heat is an impossibility in the nature of things, and faith without works is an impossibility also. There is no contradiction therefore between the teachings of Paul and James. They are only developing different sides of the same truth, and equally essential sides also.

What must we do to make Christ our Saviour?

We can do nothing to *make* Him our Saviour, for He is already *born* our Saviour. The announcement of the angels was, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." All we can do, there-

fore, is to believe this announcement and t
receive Him as our Saviour.

When a little brother is born into a family th
other children do not ask, "What shall we do t
make him our brother," but they announce joy
fully to all who enter the house, "Oh, we have
little brother! We have a new little brother
Don't you want to see him?"

Let us be like them in the simplicity of ou
faith; and, believing the declaration that unt
us has been born a Saviour, let us tell every on
the joyful news.

BIBLE READINGS.

II.

SUBJECT—GOD IS LOVE.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—*He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*—I John 4:8.

Notice that it does not say merely that God is loving, but that God is love. That is, it is His very nature, or essence. It is not merely one of His attributes, but it is Himself. Therefore, all that He does is from the root of love; and we must believe this, no matter how it may look, because it could not, in the very nature of things, be otherwise.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not."—I John 3:1.

We are to behold the "manner of love;" that is, the sort or kind of love. A few questions will help us to do this.

I. When did God begin to love us?
II. Why does He love us?
III. What manner of love is it?
IV. How much does He love us?
V. How can we know that He loves us?
VI. What return can we render for His love?

We will consider these questions one by one.

I. When did God begin to love us?

"The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."—Jer. 31:3.

"According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."—Eph. 1:4, 5.

He was always love, and therefore He has always loved us. His love has no beginning, because it is from everlasting; and it has no ending, because it is to everlasting.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? * * * * For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Rom. 8:35, 38, 39.

Some people think God loves us because we love Him, and that He does not begin to love us until we first love Him. But in the very nature of things, it must be exactly the other way.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. * * * We love Him, because He first loved us."—I John 4:10, 19.

Our great need therefore is to find out that He loves us, and our question of one another or of our own hearts, ought to be, not, "Do you love God?" but, "Do you know that God loves you?"

II. Why does God love us?

"Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He

that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love."—I John 4:7, 8.

God loves us because He is love, and can not help loving. It is His nature to love; just as the sun is light, and can not help shining, because it is its nature to shine.

"The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt."—Deut. 7:7, 8.

He loves us just because He does love us; because He created us, and we belong to Him; for a creator always loves the thing he creates.

"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."—Rom. 5:8.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."—Eph. 2:4–7.

God does not wait for us to become good to love us. He loves us while we are sinners. He hates our sin, but He loves us. Just as mothers do. Sometimes children are taught, "God will not love you if you are naughty." But this is a libel against our God, who is love. No mother would permit such a thing to be said against herself, as that she did not love her child when it was naughty. It is her very love for the little naughty darling

that nerves her to punish it, in order that she may make it good.

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness."—Heb. 12:5-10.

Our sinfulness only brings out a fresh expression of His love in the form of chastening. It is only those we love whom we care to see perfect. George Macdonald says, "Nothing is so inexorable as love, for it must have its loved ones perfect."

II. What manner of love is it? That is, how or in what way does God love us?

1. As a Creator.
2. As a Redeemer.
3. As a Father.
4. As a Mother.
5. As a Friend.
6. As a Brother.
7. As a Shepherd.
8. As a Bridegroom.
9. As He loves Himself.

1. As a Creator.

"But now, thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."—Isa. 43:1, 2.

"Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant; O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud thy sins; return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."—Isa. 44:21, 22.

We all know how much we delight in anything we create; how we like to show it to our friends, and to look at it ourselves; how tender we are of its safety, and how jealous we are of any criticisms upon it. And this joy of ours in creation and ownership will help us to understand and believe in the love of our Creator for us who are "the work of His hands.

2. He loves us as our Redeemer.

"I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His loving kindnesses. For He said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so He was their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old."—Isa. 63:7–9.

"For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."—Isa. 41:13, 14.

"Into Thine hand I commit my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."—Ps. 31:5.

"Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say: He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For

the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of Him that was stronger than he."—Jer. 31:10,11.

3. He loves us as a Father.

"He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation."—Ps. 89:26.

"And His name shall be called . . . the everlasting Father."—Isa. 9:6.

"They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born."—Jer. 31:9.

"Like as a Father pitieth His children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."—Psalm 103:13.

"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."—Luke 15:20–24.

Our Lord gave this last divine picture of what a father is, in reply to the Pharisees and Scribes, who murmured, saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." And in this reply He silenced forever every unbelieving thought that could make God out to be less tender than the human fathers He has made.

4. God loves us as a Mother.

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem."—Isa. 66:13.

"Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted. But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea,

they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are contin ually before me."—Isa. 49:13–16.

5. God loves us as a Friend.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."—John 15:13–15.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."—Exod. 33:11.

"But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend."—Isa. 41:8.

"And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God."—Jas. 2:23.

"A man that hath friends must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."—Prov. 18:24.

All that our highest ideal of friendship implies, must be ours in a friendship with God.

6. He loves us as a Brother.

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren."—Rom. 8:29.

"For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren; Saying I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: for in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."—Heb. 2:11–18.

For the divine declaration of what brotherly love is, see two or three passages.

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."—I Pet. 3:8, 9.

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"—James 2:15, 16.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"—I John 2:16, 17.

What God tells us we ought to be as brethren, that He surely must be Himself; and in His brotherhood therefore, we find an assurance of infinite love and care.

7. He loves us as a Shepherd.

"Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture."—Ps. 100:3.

"For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."—Ps. 95:7.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters."—Ps. 23:1, 2.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."—John 10:11-12.

"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."—Isa. 40:11.

8. He loves us as a Bridegroom.

"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate: but thou shalt be

called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."—Isa. 62:4, 5.

"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this My joy therefore is fulfilled.—John 3:29.

"Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast."—Matt. 9:14, 15.

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye are also become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."—Rom. 7:4.

"And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."—Rev. 21:9.

No words are needed to tell us of a bridegroom's joy over his bride; and yet it is only a faint picture of God's joy over us!

9. He loves us as He loves Himself.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it; even as the Lord the church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church."—Eph. 5:25–32.

IV. How much does He love us?

"May be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the

breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."—Eph. 3:18, 19.

Notice that it is a love which "passeth knowledge;" that all we know or can imagine of earthly love can not make us understand the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of this infinite, everlasting, unchangeable, Divine love.

"And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."—John 17:26.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."—John 17:22, 23.

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love."—John 15:9.

Notice the words "as" and "so" in these passages; and believe the wondrous fact they express; even though you may not be able to comprehend it. As the hymn expresses it—

"How thou canst think so well of us,
And be the God thou art,
Is darkness to my intellect,
But sunshine to my heart."

Read the Divine description of love in I Cor. 13:1–13, and apply each word of it to Christ, as showing of what sort His love is.

V. How can we know that He loves us?

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."—I John 4:9.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."—I John 3:16.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish,

but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."—John 3:15, 16.

God's love was not *caused* by the work of Christ, it was simply "manifested;" and all we can do is to "perceive" it. In spiritual things we perceive by believing. Our friends may love us, and may tell us so a thousand times, and may give us continual proofs of love, but unless we believe in their love, we shall never really "perceive" it nor possess it. Faith is necessary for the possession of human love, and faith is equally necessary for the possession of Divine love. God gives us His love always, but we can not perceive and possess it unless we believe it. This is in the very nature of things.

VI. What return can we render for His love? We can believe in it.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people."—Ps. 116:12-14.

"How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."—Ps. 36:7.

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us."—I John 4:16.

The first return for love is to believe in it, and accept its goodness. Nothing grieves love so much as a want of trust on the part of its beloved one. You wound the Lord more by your doubts of His love, than by all your other sins together. If a naughty child should let in doubts of its mother's

love, this would be the hardest of all to bear. Let our uttermost confidence, then, be the first return we make to this wondrous love of God.

"We love Him because He first loved us."—I John 4:19.

His love thus known and believed in, will draw out ours in return.

He *wins* our love. Just as a bridegroom wins the love of his bride by assurances and proofs of his love for her, so does our God win ours. We love Him because He first loved us. Then will follow obedience.

"And this is love, that we walk after His commandments."—2 John 6.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous."—I John 5:3.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings, and the word which ye hear, is not mine, but the Father's, which sent me."—John 14:21, 22.

Love is not talk but action. If we love we will obey. Obedience is always the test of love. It is easy to talk about our love to God, and even to work ourselves up into an emotion of love, but unless it stands the test of "walking in His commandments," it is nothing but an unreal sentimentality.

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth, is not made perfect in love."—I John 4:17, 18.

Let us ask ourselves the searching question as

to whether all fear that hath torment has been cast out of our hearts. Do we so "know and believe the love that God hath to us," as to be delivered from all fear, and care, and anxiety; and to have our hearts kept in perfect peace because we trust in Him?

GOD IS LOVE.

Like a cradle, rocking, rocking,
Silent, peaceful, to and fro;
Like a mother's sweet looks dropping
On the little face below;
Hangs the green earth, swinging, turning,
Jarless, noiseless, safe and slow;
Falls the light of God's face bending
Down, and watching us below.

And as feeble babes that suffer,
Toss and cry, and will not rest,
Are the ones the tender mother
Holds the closest, loves the best;
So when we are weak and wretched,
By our sins weighed down, distressed,
Then it is that God's great patience
Holds us closest, loves us best.

Oh great heart of God, whose loving
Can not hindered be, nor crossed;
Will not weary, will not even
In our death itself be lost!
Love divine! of such great loving
Only mothers know the cost,
Cost of love, that, all love passing,
Gave itself to save the lost!

BIBLE READINGS.

III.

SUBJECT—THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL.

FOUNDATION TEXTS:—"*For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, He saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*"—Heb. 8:7–13.

The "old covenant," which is here declared to have been put away in order to make room for a "new covenant," is the covenant of an outward law, which in the very nature of things waxes old and vanishes away before the coming of the new covenant of an inward life. That is, as long as a

man is a thief at heart, he needs an outward law to keep him from stealing; but as soon as he becomes honest at heart, he no longer needs the outward law.

"But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. * * * * But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."—Gal. 5:18, 22, 23.

The "old covenant," therefore, proceeds on the principle of work and wages; so much work, so much wages, no more, no less.

The "new covenant" on the contrary proceeds on the principle of life and fruit. We love Him because He first loved us, and *therefore* we serve Him. He has bestowed upon us a new life from Himself, and the fulfilling of the law is simply the *fruit* of the new life thus given.

"And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."—Ezek. 36:27.

Christ is called the "Mediator of the new covenant;" and the covenant is called the "new testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This therefore is the covenant under which we live, even the "power of an endless life.'

"And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God."—Heb. 7:15–19.

The following contrasts will show what is the difference between these two covenants:

The law says, *This do and thou shalt live.*

The gospel says, *Live, and then thou shalt do.*

THE LAW.

"For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them."—Rom. 10:5.

"And the law is not of faith; but, The man that doeth them shall live in them."—Gal. 3:12.

THE GOSPEL.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."—Rom. 8:2-4.

The law says, *Pay me that thou owest.*

The gospel says, *I frankly forgive thee all.*

THE LAW.

"And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again."—Lev. 24: 19, 20.

"And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." Deut. 19:21.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."—Matt. 5:38.

"But the same servant

THE GOSPEL.

"And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged."—Luke 7:40–43.

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know

went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him a hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest."—Matt. 18:28.

not what they do."—Luke 23:34.

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that though this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."—Acts 13: 38, 39.

The law says, *Make you a new heart and a new spirit.*

The gospel says, *A new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you.*

THE LAW.

"Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel."—Ezek. 18:31.

THE GOSPEL.

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."—Ezek. 36:25, 26.

The law says, *Thou shalt love God.*

The gospel says, *God loves us.*

THE LAW.

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."—Deut. 6:5.

THE GOSPEL.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. * * We love Him, because He first loved us."—I John 4:10, 19.

The law *pronounces curses.*

The gospel *announces blessings.*

THE LAW.	THE GOSPEL.
"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."—Gal. 3:10.	"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."—Rom. 4:6–8.

The law *deals with wages.*

The gospel *bestows gifts.*

THE LAW.	THE GOSPEL.
"The wages of sin is death." Rom. 6:23. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt."—Rom. 4:4.	"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Rom. 6:23. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness."—Rom. 4:5.

The gospel *demands holiness.*

The gospel *gives holiness.*

THE LAW.	THE GOSPEL.
"Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy."—Lev. 19:2. "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we	"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."—Rom. 6:14, 22. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any

observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He hath commanded us."—Deut. 6:24, 25.

man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."—Eph. 2:8-10.

The law says, *Do.*

The gospel says, *It is done.*

THE LAW.

"Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He sware unto thy fathers."—Deut. 7: 11, 12.

THE GOSPEL.

"I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."—John 17:4.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." —Eph. 1:3, 7.

The law *extorts the unwilling services of a bondsman.*

The gospel *wins the loving service of a son and freeman.*

THE LAW.

"Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband, so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." —Rom. 7:1, 2.

"But before faith came, we

THE GOSPEL.

"But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."—Gal. 3:25, 26.

"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."—Rom. 7:6.

were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."—Gal. 3:23, 24.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."—Gal. 5:1.

The law *makes blessings the result of obedience.*

The gospel *makes obedience the result of blessings.*

THE LAW.

"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth; and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God." Deut. 28:1, 2.

THE GOSPEL.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure."—I John 3:1-3.

The law says "*if.*"

The gospel says "*therefore.*"

THE LAW.

"The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto Himself, as He hath shown unto thee, *if* thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways. * * * * But it shall come to pass, *if* thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God,

THE GOSPEL.

"Having *therefore* these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."—II Cor. 7:1.

"I beseech you *therefore* brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your

to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee."—Deut. 28: 9, 15.

bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Rom. 12:1.

Under the law, *God's dealings with man were to show him his own helplessness.*

Under the gospel, *God's dealings with man are to show him the mighty power of his Saviour.*

THE LAW.

"Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."—Rom. 5:20.

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me?

THE GOSPEL.

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." —II Cor. 12:7-10.

God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."—Rom. 7:7–13.

The law *places the day of rest at the end of the week's work.*

The gospel *places the day of rest at the beginning of the week's work.*

The law *was given to restrain the "old man."*

The gospel *was given to bestow liberty upon the "new man."*

The law *was given to put to death.*

The gospel *was given to make alive.*

The Epistle to the Galatians treats of this subject more fully than any other part of Scripture. The Galatians did not seem to understand the vital difference between the two covenants, and were trying to mix them together. They did not deny Christ and the new life in Him; but they tried to add something to Christ, and to bring the new life into bondage to the law that was made for the old life. Christ *and* the law, was the heresy which caused Paul to cry out, "Oh foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" Their idea was Christ, *and* legal observances.

They seem to have begun all right; for Paul says they had received the Spirit by the hearing of faith. They had been taught at first that the Lord Jesus Christ was a complete Saviour, and

seem to have trusted Him as such. But some Jewish brethren had come among them, and said, "Oh no, you are very much mistaken; Christ is not enough alone, you must come under the Jewish law as well." They *added* external rites to the work of Christ.

We in the present day are greatly shocked at this; but in principle many do the same thing. They do not add Jewish ceremonies, but they add some other form of legality, some self effort of one kind or another. It does not make much difference what we add; the wrong thing is to add anything at all, as *necessary* to salvation. Many things may be necessary as the fruits or results of salvation; but as the procuring cause and the inward power, only the redemption that is in Christ, and the life hid with Him in God, can avail anything whatever.

The religion of the law is as though a man should make an apple orchard, by first buying some apples and tying them on to branches, then fastening the branches on the trunk, and then fastening the trunk on to the roots, and then finally getting a field and planting in it these manufactured trees. First the fruit, afterward the roots. But the religion of the Gospel begins at the root, and grows up and blooms out into flowers and fruit, which are love, joy, peace.

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ

hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. * * * But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, the man that doeth them shall live in them."—Gal. 3:1-4, 11, 12.

"Is the law then against the promises of God! God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."—Gal. 3: 21-23.

"Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so, we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God; or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."—Gal. 4: 1-11.

Finally Paul sums it all up in an emphatic exhortation; which applies to us now, no less than to the Galatians then.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. * * * * * * Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither

circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love."—Gal. 5: 1, 4–6.

And he announced the inward secret of the new and victorious life, which needs no law, because it is in its very depths a law unto itself, in the following significant words:

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."—Gal. 5: 16, 18, 24, 25.

"Against such there is no law" is the divine declaration concerning all who thus live and walk in the Spirit.

Only those who inwardly desire to break the law, are in any sense "under the law." The man who approves of the law and means to keep it, is over it, not under it. The law is a terror to evil-doers only, not to those who do well. Some of us walk through the streets of our great cities without a thought of the policemen, except as our protectors and friends; while others shrink from them as their bitterest enemies.

Let us then seek to lay aside all the old legal life of self effort and self-dependence, and let us open our hearts wide to let the overcoming life of Christ take full possession of us, and work in us to will and to do all the good pleasure of God.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.—I John 5: 4, 5.

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BIBLE READINGS.

IV.

SUBJECT—ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—"*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*"—Heb. 10:22.

By the assurance of faith is meant a clear and definite knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, of reconciliation with God, and of our relationship with Him as our Father.

About these vital matters we must be able to say "I know." Not "I hope so," or "I wish so," but firmly and unhesitatingly, "I know."

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."—Ps. 89:15, 16.

"Thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."—Isa. 60:16.

"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."—John 14:20.

This assurance is necessary for all right living. It ought to be the first step in the Christian life. In the absence of this assurance, lies the secret of much of the failure of Christians. They present the strange anomaly of children who doubt their parentage, of heirs who are afraid to take

possession of their inheritance, of a bride who is not sure she has been really married.

What could we expect from such doubts in earthly relationships, but indifference, fear, anxiety, unkindness, sorrow and rebellion?

And are not these the very things that are found far too often in the hearts of God's children, in reference to their relationships to Him?

"Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and He shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until He have destroyed thee."—Deut. 28:47, 48.

No soul can serve the Lord with joyfulness who is in doubt as to the reality or the stability of its relations with Him. All human comfort is destroyed in such a case, as affecting earthly relations; and but little divine comfort is, as we all know, to be found in doubtful spiritual relations.

Can we then suppose for a moment that this too frequent reign of doubt in Christians' hearts was God's plan for His people? Does the Bible teach that it is?

I answer most emphatically, No, a thousand times No!

The Old Testament never contemplated the idea of Israelites, who did not know whether they were Israelites or not. Every law given to them or promise made, was founded on the previously

acknowledged and understood fact, that they did in very truth belong to the family of Israel, and were indeed the people of God.

Before they were allowed to join the Lord's army and fight His battles, they had to "declare their pedigree."

"Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies. And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of the house of his fathers. * * * * * And they assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month, and they declared their pedigrees after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, by their polls."—Num. 1: 2, 3, 4, 18.

And before they could enter into the office of priest they must "find their register" and "reckon their genealogy," for no strangers were allowed to "come nigh."

"And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death."—Num. 3:10.

"These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim."—Ezra 2:62, 63.

And similarly we, who are God's people now, can not effectively fight His battles nor enjoy true priestly communion with Him, until we also can "declare our pedigree," that we *are* the children of God, and "reckon our genealogy" that we are born of Him.

"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."—Gal. 4:6, 7.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."—I John 3:1, 2.

We can not have the spirit of a son, until we know we are sons. To doubt it, would be to lose the spirit at once.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."—Rom. 8:14–17.

Our Lord Himself always speaks to His disciples in terms of absolute certainty as to their relations to God.

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."—Luke 12:32.

"Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you: but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."—Luke 10:20.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."—John 17:22, 23.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."—John 14:1–3.

"If it were not so He would have told us."

Surely we may trust Him, and accept His statements as facts, without any further questioning.

Nowhere in the Acts do we find the apostles or any of the early believers, questioning their standing, or doubting as to their relationship to the Lord. Peter said concerning their experiences on the day of Pentecost:

"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."—Acts 2:16–18.

"If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole."—Acts 4:9, 10.

"For we can not but speak the things which we have seen and heard."—Acts 4:20.

No one can read the history of the words and deeds of the apostles and the early believers, without seeing that they were saturated through and through with an utter certainty of their salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was as much a part of them, as their nationality as Jews, or their nativity in Palestine, and was no more open to question. Let us try to imagine them as being filled with the doubtings and questionings of modern Christians, and think what effect it would have had upon their preaching and their work. We can see in a moment that it would have been fatal

to the spread of the gospel, and that a Church founded on doubts and questionings, could have made no headway in an unbelieving world.

This tone of utter assurance runs through all the Epistles. They are everyone addressed to people of whom it was taken for granted that they knew their standing as the reconciled and forgiven children of God; and the writers express the same assurance for themselves, as they do for those to whom they write.

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God. * * * To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." —Rom. 1:1, 7.

"Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."—I Cor. 1:1, 2.

"Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."—I Thess. 1:1–4.

"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow labourer, and to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house, Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints."—Philemon 1: 1–5.

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,

through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."—I Pet. 1: 1, 2.

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."—II Pet. 1: 1.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.—I John 1: 1-3.

"The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever."—II John 1, 2.

"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called."—Jude:1.

Again, if we run through the Epistles we shall invariably find that they also, like the Gospels and the Acts, are saturated through and through with assurance. Nowhere is a doubt or a question of the believer's standing in the family of God even so much as hinted at or supposed possible.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."—Rom. 5:1, 2.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height,

nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." —Rom. 8:35–39.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."—I Cor. 3;16, 17.

"What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." —I Cor. 6:19, 20.

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."—Gal. 3:26, 27.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved: in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."—Eph. 1:3–8.

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."—Col. 1: 12–14.

"But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."—Eph. 2:13.

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross."—Col. 2:13, 14.

"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers,

because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."—I John 2:12–14.

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."–I Pet. 2:9.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."—I Pet. 1:3–5.

These are only a few samples of the voice of every Epistle. Notice the assured expressions "*hath* blessed," "*hath* chosen," "*hath* made us accepted." Notice also the present tense of possession continually used, "are," "have," "hath, "is." Never once is there a "hope so," or "perhaps so," or "I wish it might be so." Unquestioning, rejoicing assurance breathes from every word.

All exhortations to holiness are based on this assured knowledge of our reconciliation with God; and all exhortations to service also.

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."—II Cor. 7:1.

We are not to be holy in order to gain the promises, but because we *have* the promises.

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."—Col. 3:2–5.

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"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."—Eph. 4:30–32.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."—I John 3:1–3.

God wants from us the service of a *son*, not of a *servant* only. A servant works for wages, a son from love. The servant works to gain something; the son because all has been given him. How can we render the son's service, unless we know that we *are* sons?

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."—Eph. 5:1, 2.

"Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."—Gal. 4:7.

Since then we have proved thus incontrovertibly that the assurance of faith is the only normal condition of a child of God, our next point must be as to how it is to be arrived at.

We answer that it comes simply by *believing God.* He says certain things about Himself and about us; faith believes them, and assurance follows. Notice that in the Scriptures "believing" and "having" are always joined together. "He that believeth, hath," is the continual declaration!

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."—John 6:47.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."—John 3: 14–18.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."—John 3:36.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."—John 5:24.

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."—John 1:12.

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."—John 6:35.

"And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."—John 6:40.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"—John 11:25, 26.

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."—John 20:30, 31.

Notice that it never says, "he that feeleth, hath" but always "he that believeth." Our feelings are no guide whatever here. In all matters of fact, it is folly to depend upon feelings; and, in truth, we never do it in our earthly affairs. We never say over a piece of good or bad news, "Do I *feel*

it is true," but we confine ourselves simply to the question, "*Is* it true?"

Who would be so silly as to enter a railroad depot and take the first car at hand, and then sit down and try to "feel" whether it was the right car or not? We all know that the state of our feelings could not alter the facts; and our sole aim in such cases is always to find out the facts.

In order for assurance of faith then, as to our relations with the Lord, we must not depend upon our feelings, but must simply find out the facts.

God's order, and the order of good common sense as well, is always I. Fact, II. Faith, III. Feeling. But in matters of religion man reverses this order, and says I. Feeling, II. Faith, III. Fact.

And just as in the case of the railway train we would find peace and assurance by asking some one who knew, and by believing his word, so also in the case of our relations with the Lord, we must hear and believe what He says about it, without regard to how we feel.

"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God, which He hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."—I John 5:9-11.

We receive the "witness of men" continually without a question or doubt; shall we be less ready

to receive the "witness of God?" In verse 10 notice that it is not he that hath the witness in himself, shall believe, but he that believeth shall have the witness in himself.

Here we have, first the fact, second the faith, third the feeling.

What are we to do then in order to get the assurance of faith?

"Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom He hath sent."—John 6:28, 29.

We must believe two things. First, what God says concerning Christ. Second, what He says concerning us.

It is not really believing a person if we only believe half he says; and yet many who would consider it the worst of sins to disbelieve God's testimony concerning Christ, consider it no sin at all, but in fact rather virtuous humility, to doubt His testimony concerning themselves. They dare not doubt that Jesus is the Christ, but find no difficulty in doubting whether they are themselves "born of God." And yet God joins the two inseparably together.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God."—I John 5:1.

Here is a plain and simple statement. "Whosoever believeth, *is* born," not will be, but is, now in the present moment; for no one can believe who is not born of God.

But you may say, how can I know that I believe? Could you write a paper saying, "I do not believe that Jesus is the Christ" and sign it with your name? Would it not be a lie if you should do so? If the alternative were presented to you of denying Christ or going to prison, would you not choose the prison?

You do believe, therefore, that Jesus is the Christ; and God says that whosoever does, *is* born of Him. Does not this settle the question?

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."—I John 4:15.

Could language be plainer than this? If you confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in you, now.

"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."—Rom. 10:8,9.

What should we think of a child who should doubt whether she was really the mother's own child; who should say "Well, I have a trembling hope I am, but that is all?" Would not such expressions be equivalent to casting a doubt on the mother's word? And do not our doubts as to whether we are really God's children "make Him a liar?"

"He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."—I John 5:10,11.

The record we are to believe is that "God hath given to us eternal life." If He has given it, we must have it, and there is nothing more to be said about it.

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."—I John 5:13.

We *have* eternal life if we believe; but we may not "*know*" that we have it, and our peace depends upon our knowing it. A man may have a fortune left to him by a friend, but until he "knows it," he can not enjoy it.

The assurance of faith, therefore, is simply the "knowing" of which John speaks. And it arises from our belief in the trustworthy testimony, not of our feelings, but of God's word.

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through His name."

Not what we feel, but what is the record; not what are our experiences, but what has been "written;" this is the foundation for the assurance of faith.

We all of us know the curious experience of being "turned round" when walking in the streets of a city or traveling in a railroad car, when we feel as if we were going in one direction, although as a fact we are going in exactly the opposite direction. Our feelings in this case contradict

the facts, and we may even know this; and yet it is almost impossible not to yield to these feelings and take the wrong direction. I have discovered that I can conquer these feelings, and turn myself round right, by just repeating over to myself in a very emphatic way, when I *feel* that I am going north yet know as a fact that I am going south, "I am, I *am*, I AM going south." In a minute or two my feelings always come under the control of the fact, and I begin to feel, as well as to know, that I really am going south.

In the same way, when we have convinced ourselves from God's "record" that our sins are forgiven and that our peace is made with God, we can then control our feeling that it is not so, by a similar process. We can assert on the authority of God's word, "My sins *are* forgiven; I *am* God's child; God *is* reconciled to me; I *am* a Christian."

Such a course, persevered in regardless of feeling, will always bring peace and deliverance to every soul that is willing to take God at His word, and to risk all on His trustworthiness.

BIBLE READINGS.

V.

SUBJECT—KEEPING.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—*And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*"—Gen. 28:15.

We all feel the need of being *kept* by a power outside of ourselves. Life is full of dangers to both soul and body, and we are most of the time too blind to see them. We are like little helpless, ignorant children, walking in strange pathways, and knowing nothing of the snares and pitfalls that await our unwary steps.

We have need to cry out continually with the Psalmist:

"But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute. Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity."—Psalm 141:8, 9.

And continually we have the Lord's answer:

"For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet."—Psalm 91:11–13.

"Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be

afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken."—Prov. 3:23-26.

The Lord is like a mother who holds the hand of her little child as they walk together, that she may keep it from falling over the snares that lie in its way. It is the mother holding the child that makes it safe, not the child holding the mother. Notice the words "bear thee up," and illustrate by the infant in the mother's arms, safe because of her upholding. Its little frightened grasps when danger is nigh, do not make it any safer, for its safety consists in the fact that its mother holds it, and everything depends on whether *she* is able to keep it safe.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."—Jude, 24.

Mothers are not always able to keep their children from falling, but God is always able. People sometimes say, in their ignorance, "If I get religion, I am afraid I can not keep it." This is true, you could not; but if you let God get you He will keep you.

"I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."—Isa. 27:3.

Our hearts are like a garden open on every side to enemies who are pressing in to ravage and destroy; and there is no safety for us except in the keeping power of the Divine Husbandman,

who neither slumbers nor sleeps, and whom no enemy can either elude or conquer.

"Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.—Jer. 31:10.

We are like the poor helpless sheep who have no armor against their enemies, and no wisdom to save themselves from danger. But we have a Divine Shepherd to care for us, and therefore we need not fear.

"For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste, howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye."—Deut. 32:9, 10.

Nothing is dearer to a man or more tenderly cared for than the apple of his eye. And since we are to the Lord "as the apple of His eye," we must be sure of the tenderest Divine keeping.

"Show thy marvelous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about."—Ps. 17:7-9.

The mother hen keeps her little chickens under the shadow of her wings, and so will the Lord keep us, *If* we will let Him. But this is a very large "If." What would we think of a little chicken which should stand off by itself, trembling with fright when danger was nigh, and saying, "I am not worthy to go under my mother's wing. I am too little, and too weak, and too insignificant.

I must wait to go under until I am stronger and more worthy of her love?" Would not the mother hen have answered such a foolish little chicken by saying, "It is just because you *are* little and weak that I am spreading out my wings to cover you, and am clucking for you to come. If you were grown large and strong I would not want you. Your littleness and your weakness are your claim to my care."

Is there nothing in this parable to teach us a lesson?

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust; His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."—Ps. 91: 1-10.

Have we never said, or at least thought, that we were too weak and unworthy to "make the Lord our refuge;" and have we not sometimes in our secret hearts planned to seek this refuge when we should feel ourselves more worthy of entering it?

"My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper:

the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore."—Ps. 121:2–8.

This Psalm might be called the Bible Keep. The Keep in an ancient castle was always the strongest and best protected room in the Castle, the one which could be the last reached by any enemy. In this Keep all the sick and weak and helpless inmates of the Castle were hidden in every time of danger. The qualification for entrance was simply and only, need and weakness. How foolish then it would have been for any to have made their weakness the reason for remaining outside! And yet how continually is this done towards the Lord's Keep.

"The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."—Ps. 116:6–8.

It is the simple, the weak, those who are "brought low" whom the Lord preserves.

Notice the fact that this Divine Keeper never slumbers nor sleeps, and therefore never neglects those for whom He cares. Think of the fatal consequences of neglect on the part of keepers of a prison, or keepers of a flock of sheep, or keepers of a vineyard on a frosty night, or sentinels keeping a dangerous outpost, and show by contrast what sort of a Keeper our Lord is.

We all realize the responsibilities of the human keeper to whose care anything has been committed. When anything is given to ourselves to keep, we feel that we must care for that thing in preference to our own, if there is any choice. And from these high ideals of responsibility in our own case we may learn what our Divine Keeper must necessarily do.

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled."—John 17:11, 12.

"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."—John 6:38, 39.

We may therefore commit ourselves with the utmost confidence to the keeping of the Lord our Keeper.

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."—I Pet. 4:19.

For our Creator is our Keeper. And He is a *faithful* Creator. Men whom we trust often prove unfaithful, but He never! And if *we* are grieved when doubts are felt of our faithfulness to any trust committed to us, how much more must He.

"But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil."—II Thess. 3:3.

"Thus saith God the Lord, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the

people upon it, and spirit to them that walk herein: I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles."—Isa. 42:5, 6.

Therefore Paul could say:

"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."—II Tim. 1:12.

If we know Him, we can not fail to trust Him. No one who knows Him ever did yet. And this after all is the true secret of confidence—knowledge of the trustworthiness of the one to be trusted. We act on this in our earthly affairs, and are never so silly as to look inside ourselves to see whether we can or ought to trust another. We look at that other instead, and try to find out his character and his ways. But in their intercourse with the Lord many act on an entirely different principle. They look at themselves for a warrant and ground of trust, instead of at Him. They behold self and its untrustworthiness, and are filled with doubts and despair. Whereas a single soul-look at Him will fill us with perfect peace, because of *His* utter trustworthiness.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."—Isa. 26:3.

Emphasize the words "perfect peace," and illustrate them by the peace that comes when we have entrusted any precious thing to safe-keeping. A bank for instance. Think how we are continually trusting banks, and how comfortable we feel

when we have transferred our money from our own keeping to that of some safe bank. Illustrate what trust in God ought to be, by the nature of our trust in the bank. Show the folly of doubt, by the folly of every hour running back to the bank to see if our money is safe. And, by the indignation of the bank officers at such a course, show how our doubts and fears must grieve our God.

Our part in this divine keeping is threefold, as it always is in every stage of the spiritual life. We must *yield*, and *trust* and *obey*.

"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."—Ps. 31:19, 20.

"O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee."—Ps. 25:20.

There can be no keeping without yielding and trusting. In the very nature of things, a keeper must have that which he is to keep, entrusted utterly to his care.

Neither can there be any keeping without obedience.

"My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life, to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman."—Prov. 6:20–24.

"He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee."—Prov. 4:4–6.

"Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He sware unto thy fathers."—Deut. 7:11, 12.

If we would be kept, we must be guided, and must follow that guidance.

"Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared."—Exod. 23:20.

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, (which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know,) that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him."—Deut. 8:2–6.

"For the Lord our God, He it is that brought us up, and our fathers, out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed."—Josh. 24:17.

We are tempted to think that it is not true keeping unless it is in our own way and according to our own ideas. But our Lord Himself has taught us that it must be in God's way and not our own, or it would not be true keeping at all.

"And he brought Him to Jerusalem, and set Him on a

pinnacle of the temple, and said unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus, answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."—Luke 4:9–12.

Only God, who knows the end of things from the beginning, can keep us, and if He shall *seem* to leave us to the will of our enemies for a time, it is only that He may bring us to a grander victory in the end.

For we are not to be taken out of the world and its trials, but are to be kept in the midst of them, and are to be preserved from the evil that is in them.

"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."—John 17:15.

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."—I Pet. 1:5–7.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."—Rev. 3:10.

The divine pathway by which we may enter this heavenly Keep, even while here on earth, is plainly set before us.

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—Phil. 4:6, 7.

We must give up all care of our own, by an utter surrender of everything to the Divine Caretaker, and by an implicit trust in Him; and then must just simply let Him know our wants and our needs from day to day. And if this is honestly done, and *persisted in steadfastly*, the result will unfailingly be, that the peace of God will keep "as in a garrison" (see Greek,) the hearts and minds of all who thus commit themselves and all they have to His care.

I remember once hearing of a man who thought he could not live unless he kept himself alive. He was afraid his breath would stop if he did not keep it going by his own efforts, and he tried so hard to keep breathing, that he nearly strangled himself in the struggle. His family in great alarm called in a physician, who, seeing at once the difficulty, called out to him peremptorily to stop trying to breathe. "I shall die if I do," gasped out the poor man. "Die then," exclaimed the doctor, "but STOP!" The man, overborne by the voice of authority, obeyed, and the moment he stopped trying to breathe, his breath came easily and without effort.

Just so it is with some Christians. They are trying to keep themselves alive, and their life is nearly strangled in the effort. If they would but give up trying to live, and would let Christ keep them alive, they would find themselves living easily and without effort.

BIBLE READINGS.

VI.

SUBJECT—REST OF SOUL.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*"—Matt. 11:28.

There is in every human heart a cry for *rest.* Life at its best in this stage of existence is full of weariness. Both soul and body "labour and are heavy laden" with their struggles; and humanity makes one long moan for rest.

"My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."—Ps. 55:4–8.

We would gladly "fly away" if we could, but we may not; and therefore the rest our Lord proposes is not a rest *from* the trial and struggle, but a rest *in* it.

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass."—Ps. 37:7.

It is a rest "*in the Lord,*" not in circumstances, or things, or people, and therefore it takes the "fret" out of life. This divine rest is to the soul

what resting in a bed is to the body. We all know the delightful relaxing of every strain that comes to us in bed; the delicious letting go of the whole body in a perfect abandonment of ease and comfort. And just such is the ease of soul that comes from resting "in the Lord."

But this rest implies perfect confidence in Him. If one should lie down in a bed that was in any way insecure, and was therefore liable to fall, it would be impossible to let one's self go in an abandonment of rest. We would be compelled to hold on to something else, to keep ourselves safe in such a bed as that. And it must be because Christians do not really believe the Lord alone to be a perfectly secure resting-place, that they seek so eagerly for something else to hold on by; some good feelings, or good works, some church ordinances, or some special and remarkable experiences. What would we think of the folly of a man who should feel afraid his bed could not support him, and should try to hold himself up by ropes attached to the ceiling? And yet this would be nothing compared to the folly of those Christians who say they are resting in Christ, and who yet are holding on to other supports.

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places."—Isa. 32:17, 18.

Christ is a resting-place that can not fail; and

to those who have come to Him, there ought to be no fear of falling, and no strain to hold one's self safe.

"My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place."—Jer. 50:6.

How truly God's people have "forgotten their resting-place," let the almost universal restlessness of "believers" testify. And the result is as grievous to us now, as it was to Israel of old.

"Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and He shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until He have destroyed thee. * * * * And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see."—Deut. 28:47, 48, 65, 66, 67.

"For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses: therefore shall ye flee: and, we will ride upon the swift: therefore shall they that pursue you be swift."—Isa. 30:15, 16.

"To whom He said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest: and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear."—Isa. 28:12.

This blessed rest however always awaits God's people, wherever or whoever they may be, and no

past unrest can avail to hinder us from a present entering in.

"There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God."—Heb. 4:9.

"Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid."—Jer. 30:10.

But this rest can only be entered into by faith. Unbelief effectually, and in the very nature of things, shuts us out.

"And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."—Heb. 3:18, 19; 4:1, 2.

Notice the expressions "enter into" and entering into." We can not work for this rest, nor purchase it, nor provide it; we simply "enter into" the rest provided for us by One, who offers Himself to us as our resting-place. Just as we rest in a strong and loving earthly friend, who undertakes our case and promises to carry it through, so, only infinitely more, must we rest in the Lord; and it requires faith on our part in both cases alike. If we doubt our friend, we can not rest, no matter how much we may try; and if we doubt our Lord, we can not rest either, no matter how much we may try. For rest comes always by trusting, not by trying.

"For we which have believed do enter into rest: as He said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest, although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: again He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time; as it is said, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would He not afterwards have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."—Heb. 4:3–11.

The "labour" to enter into rest, is not the labour to work, but the labour to cease from our own working. The natural thought of the human heart is, that salvation in everything is to be gained by our own self efforts, and it is indeed a "labour" often to get rid of this.

Refer to the marginal reading on Heb. 4:9, where rest is rendered "keeping of a Sabbath." This teaches us in type what true soul-rest is.

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made."—Gen. 2:1–3.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul

shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed."—Exod. 31:12–17.

What this outward Sabbath was to the children of Israel, that the inward keeping of a Sabbath is to be to us now. We are to cease from our own works inwardly, as they were to cease outwardly.

"And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day."—Exod. 16:27–30.

The Sabbath was a *gift*, not a *demand*. The Lord had provided the supply for that day, therefore they did not need to seek for any more, but were commanded to rest instead.

"And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall surely be put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses."—Num. 15: 32–36.

This is a type of the spiritual death which comes upon the soul that breaks God's inward

Sabbath of rest, by the spirit of legal dependence upon its own self efforts for salvation.

"For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His."—Heb. 4:10.

God rested because He had finished His work. We are to rest because the Lord works for us. Everything is provided for us in Christ, and we are to "enter into" the results of His labour, and be at rest.

"Thus saith the Lord: Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work; but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers."—Jer. 17: 21, 22.

In this inward "keeping of a Sabbath" we are not to bear burdens, because the Lord bears them for us.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."—Ps. 55:22.

"But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched."—Jer. 17:27.

There may arise the natural fear that nothing will be accomplished for the soul that thus keeps a continual inward Sabbath, and bears no burdens. But the answer is full and glorious:

"And it shall come to pass if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of the city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein; then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the

men of Judah, and the men of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain forever. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and meat offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the Lord."—Jer. 17:24–26.

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."—Isa. 58:13, 14.

Plentiful blessings, full of richness, come to the soul that thus ceases from its own works, and lets God work for it. When we bear our own burdens and do our own work, deadness and loss are the result; when we rest in the Lord, riches and victory follow.

This is further illustrated in the Sabbath of the seventh year which was enjoined upon the Israelites; and the Sabbath of the year of jubilee, which occurred every fiftieth year.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the Lord. Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land."—Lev. 25:1–5.

"And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years.

Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound, on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his posession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed." —Lev. 25:8–11.

This typifies the quietude of faith, when the full rest is reached for everything, and when the soul has no need to carry burdens or do work.

"And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat of the old store." —Lev. 25:20–22.

Notice the question of unbelief in verse 20, "What shall we eat?" and the answer in verse 22, "ye shall eat of the old fruit;" type of the store that is laid up for us in Christ, who is made unto us "wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

"And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee, and for thy cattle, and for the beast that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be meat."—Lev. 25:6.

In divine things our "keeping of Sabbaths" brings to us our richest blessings. Our very rest is "meat" for us, and for all who belong to us. Moreover our resting is a "feast" to the Lord.

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them,

Concerning the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings."—Lev. 23:2, 3.

On the days of the Lord's feasts, no work was to be done. Notice the expression so frequently used in this 23d chapter of Leviticus, "ye shall do no servile work therein," see verses 7, 8, 21, 25, 35, 36. There are many Christians who try to keep the feasts of the Lord by doing "servile work;" that is, work which is done from duty only, and not from love; work which is a "great cross" and a "heavy burden," and which would not be done at all, if the soul could hope to get to Heaven by any other pathway.

"And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a Sabbath of rest."—Lev. 23:30–32.

We can not feast while those we love are toiling; and neither can our God.

"And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God: but the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever."—I Chron. 22:8–10.

The Lord can not make His abode in the midst

of conflict and unrest; and we can not know His abiding presence in the inward temple of our hearts, while our experience is only one of conflict. An interior rest must be realized before this inward divine union can be known.

"For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when He giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose, to cause His name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you."—Deut. 12:9–11.

"David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son, saying, is not the Lord your God with you? and hath He not given you rest on every side? for He hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the Lord, and before His people. Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God; arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the Lord."—I Chron. 22:17–19.

The Lord rests when we rest.

"Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting-place, thou and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness."—II Chron. 6:41.

"For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."—Ps. 132:13, 14.

A mother can not rest while her little ones are toiling or bearing burdens. She must see them all at rest before she herself can be comfortable. And just so it is with our God.

There are two conditions to soul-rest expressed in the two following verses:

"Take my yoke upon you and learn of me and ye shall find rest to your souls."

"We which have believed do enter into rest."

Surrender, faith, and obedience are necessary at every step of the divine progress, and nowhere more necessary than here. Without them rest is simply impossible, in the very nature of things. The little child rests in its mother, only when it yields unquestioning submission to her control, and trusts implicitly in her love. The ox that yields to the yoke without chafing, rests under it; while the young bullock, "unaccustomed to the yoke," finds it a galling burden. Truly many Christians have less sense than the dumb animals; for the animals, when they find the yoke inevitable, yield to it and it becomes easy, while we are tempted to chafe and worry under it as long as life lasts.

Learn to "take" the yoke upon you. Do not wait for it to be forced on you; but bow your neck to it willingly, and "take" it. Say "*Yes, Lord*" to each expression of His will in all the circumstances of your lives. Say it with full consent to everything; to the loss of your money, or the loss of your health, or to the malice of enemies or the cruelty of friends. Take each yoke as it comes, and in the taking you will find rest.

Notice the expressions in Matt. 11:28, 29, "I will *give* you rest," and "ye shall *find* rest." This

rest can not be earned, nor bought, nor attained. It is simply *given* by God, and *found* by us. And all who thus come to Christ in the way of surrender and trust, "find" it without any effort. They "enter into rest."

For in His presence there is never any unrest.

"And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."—Exod. 33:14.

The mere presence of the mother is perfect rest to the little babe, no matter what tumult or danger may surround it. And, if we only knew Him, God's presence would be perfect rest to us.

"When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" —Job 34:29.

Among the peaks of the Sierra Nevada mountains, not far from the busy whirl of San Francisco, the great metropolis of the Pacific coast, lies Lake Tahoe. It is twenty-three miles long, ten miles wide, and so deep that the line at nineteen hundred feet does not touch bottom; and it lies five thousand feet above the neighbouring ocean. Storms come and go in lower waters, but this lake the while is so still and its water so clear that the eye can penetrate, it is said, a hundred feet into its depths. A bell can be heard for ten or twenty miles. Around its mild verdant sides are the mountains, ever crowned with snow. The sky above is as calm as the motionless water. Nature loses scarcely anything of its clear outline

as it is reflected there. Here the soul may learn something of what *rest* is, as day after day one opens one's heart to let the sweet influences of nature's Sabbath enter and reign. And this is but a faint type of what we may find in Christ.

In the pressure of the greatest responsibilities, in the worry of the smallest cares, in the perplexity of life's moments of crisis, we may have the Lake Tahoe rest in the fastnesses of God's will. Learn to live in this rest; and in the calm of spirit which it will give, your soul will reflect as in a mirror the "beauty of the Lord," and the tumult of men's lives will be calmed in your presence as your tumults have been calmed in the presence of God.

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places."—Isa. 32: 17, 18.

BIBLE READINGS.

VII.

SUBJECT—CONSECRATION, OR SURRENDER OF THE WILL TO GOD.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.*"—Rom. 12:1, 2.

However widely Christians may differ on other subjects, however divergent may be their "views" of truth or of doctrine, there is one point upon which every thoughtful soul will agree; and that is, the fact that we all, without reference to our "views" or "doctrines," are called to an entire surrender of ourselves to the will of God. We are made for union with Him, and the only pathway to this must of course be a perfect harmony between our will and His. For "how *can* two walk together except they be agreed?"

Therefore God's commands to us to be holy, are all based upon the fact that He to whom we belong is holy.

"But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in

all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy: for I am holy."—I Pet. 1:15, 16.

"For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."—Lev. 11: 44, 45.

In order to be one with Him, which is our final destiny, we must be like Him in character; and since He is holy, we can not be "partakers of His nature," without ourselves being holy also.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, Saying, Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy."—Lev. 19:1, 2.

"Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you."—Lev. 20:7, 8.

It is because we *are* the Lord's, and not in order that we may become His, that we are called to be holy. "I am the Lord your God," is always the ground of the appeal. Not, "I will be your God, if you will be holy," but "Be ye holy because I already am the Lord your God."

Notice the "therefores" in this connection.

"For ye are bought with a price: *therefore* glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."—I Cor. 6:20.

"Having *therefore* these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."—II Cor. 7:1.

It is because we *have been* bought with a price, and not in order to induce our Lord to buy us, that we are urged to holiness.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed

upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure."—I John 3:1–3.

Having such a hope as this of being one day like Him, we are incited now to purify ourselves even as He is pure.

The preliminary step to consecration, therefore, must be to settle once for all the question as to whether we belong to the Lord or not, and whether the promises of the gospel are really ours. And then, when this is settled, let us "therefore" present ourselves in glad and loving surrender to the Divine Master who laid down His life to make us His own.

The children of Israel were not called upon to consecrate themselves until after they were saved from Egypt. The law could not be given while they were in bondage to Pharaoh. Therefore in their history, which is a wonderful type of our spiritual life, they came to consecration only after many other steps had been taken.

We can trace these steps in the four books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

In Exodus they came out of Egypt; answering to our deliverance from the bondage of sin.

In Leviticus they received the commands of God as to how they should order their worship

and their lives in the land of promise into which God was leading them.

In Numbers they failed through unbelief to enter into the promised land, and in consequence wandered in the wilderness forty years; answering to the common Christian experience of failure and wandering.

In Deuteronomy they came a second time to the borders of the land, and were called to an entire consecration, before they could enter in. The commands of God were rehearsed by Moses, and they were asked if they would keep and do them; and this is therefore the book of consecration.

"Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."—Deut. 4:1, 2.

"Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey."—Deut. 6:1-3.

"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good."—Deut. 10:12, 13.

Consecration means just what the book of Deuteronomy teaches, that we should surrender ourselves to the Lord, to hear, and keep, and do His will. It means the choosing of His will before everything else. It means saying "Yes" to Him throughout the whole range of our being. It means the leaving of one's whole self in His hands, to be dealt with as He shall please. It means the surrender of all liberty of choice, except the liberty to choose His will and His way.

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."—Matt. 10:37–39.

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—Matt. 16:24–26.

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, can not be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he hath sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he can not be my disciple."—Luke 14:26–33.

In these passages our Lord Himself tells us what consecration means. And in another passage He shows us that it must not be a pretense, a consecration of words only, nor even a consecration of religious service only; but that it must be a reality, in the daily *doing* of the will of God.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."—Matt. 7:21–23.

God's purpose in our redemption was our entire consecration. Christians too often look upon consecration as something extra added on to salvation, not necessarily an essential part; and therefore think it is optional with them to enter into it or not, as they may please. Whereas the Bible declares that salvation is nothing, if it does not ultimately lead to holiness; for salvation in God's thought *is* holiness.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people. And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us: to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He sware to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life."—Luke 1:68–75.

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins."—Matt. 1:21.

"Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."—Acts 3:26.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."—Titus 2:11-14.

It is very striking to notice that of the many announcements made concerning the work Christ came to accomplish, nearly every one declares it to be the deliverance from *sin*, rather than the escape of *punishment*. It is a salvation to *holiness*, rather than a salvation to *Heaven*. Of course punishment is escaped, and Heaven is gained, in the nature of things, when we are saved from sin; since the greater always involves the less. But the vital thing in the redemption of Christ is evidently the redemption "from all iniquity," and the "purifying unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

"And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmakers; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites."—Exod. 3:7, 8.

The thought of God in the deliverance of Israel was not that they should wander in the wilderness, but that they should be brought into the

promised land; which land typifies the life of full consecration.

Entire consecration therefore is binding upon every Christian, and sooner or later each one must come to know it.

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.'—Heb. 12:14.

Our Lord teaches us this in the contrast He draws between the house built on the rock, and the one built on the sand.

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."—Matt. 7:24–27.

"Building on the rock" here evidently means the hearing and doing the will of God; while "building on the sand" was the hearing but doing it not. The contrast was between consecration and no consecration. There is therefore no alternative. If we would have our house to stand, we *must* be consecrated, for without consecration it will fall, and "great will be the fall of it."

In Deuteronomy 28th chapter, we have a striking confirmation of this, in the contrast there drawn between those who "hearken unto the voice of the Lord to observe and do all His commandments," and those who "will not hearken."

"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all His commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out."—Deut. 28:1–6.

"But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out."—Deut. 28:15–19.

It is deeply interesting to read the whole chapter through with this contrast in mind. We should make a spiritual application of the blessings and curses spoken of. Our enemies are spiritual enemies; our possessions are spiritual riches; our sight or our blindness are the sight or blindness of the soul; our diseases are the diseases of sin; our hunger and nakedness are spiritual; and our bondage is the bondage of the spirit. As a matter of fact every Christian can testify to the truth of one or the other of these descriptions. Those who know what it is to be consecrated, know also that the promised blessings have been theirs; and on the other hand those who have not consecrated themselves, know only too

well how much of the consequent loss and failure have come into their spiritual lives.

Consecration brings the soul into relations of infinite blessedness to the Lord.

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me."—John 14:21-24.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." —John 15:14.

"For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."—Mark 3:35.

To be His "friends," to know His conscious indwelling presence, to be as it were His "brother and sister and mother," all these things are surely full of unspeakable worth to our souls.

"And it came to pass, as He spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But He said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."—Luke 11:27, 28.

We may have wished often, in our love for our Divine Master, that we could have held Him in our arms and pressed him to our bosoms, but here we see that a present life of consecration is more to be desired than even this.

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."—Exod. 19:5, 6.

Only a consecrated soul can know the joy of being God's "peculiar treasure." And only a consecrated soul can know clearly the will of God, for obedience is the universal key to knowledge.

"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."—John 7:17.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant."—Ps. 25:14.

Consecration brings rejoicing. At the first sight of it, the soul shrinks and is afraid; but when it has looked more deeply into the beauty and blessedness of the will of God, it learns to rejoice. This was the case of the Israelites in Nehemiah's time.

"So they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them."—Neh. 8:8–12.

After a time of long backsliding on the part of the children of Israel, during which the book of God's law had been lost sight of, it was found again, and the people had all been assembled in the public square of the city to hear it read. At first they wept, but as they understood it better,

they saw it was a cause of rejoicing and not of sorrow, and they made "great mirth because they had understood the words that were declared unto them."

God's will is always our highest joy. He would have us always to "rejoice in our feasts."

"And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes. Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: and thou shalt rejoice in thy feasts, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose: because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice."—Deut. 16: 12-15.

In fact, how can we do other than love the will of our God when we become acquainted with Him, and learn to know that His will is the will of infinite love and must be therefore infinitely lovely. No most loving mother's will for her child was ever half so lovely as this sweet beloved will of our God for us. It is something to delight in, instead of to fear; and the words "Thy will be done," when once we understand them, become the dearest words our lips can utter.

"Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."—Ps. 40:7, 8.

"Jesus saith unto them, my meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work."—John 4:34.

Do we "delight" to do God's will? Is it our "meat" to do it?

We need to watch against a "grudging service." The enemy is always trying to get in the word duty instead of the word delight; he says a stern "you must" instead of the loving "you may." When a mother cares for her child from duty only, the tender sweetness of the mother love has gone. When the husband or wife begin to say "I ought" instead of "I delight to" in their relations towards one another, the home becomes a prison. There is no slavery like the slavery of love, but its chains are sweet. It knows nothing of "sacrifice," no matter what may be given up. It "delights to do the will" of the beloved one.

Our Lord can never be satisfied until this is the attitude of our souls towards Him. His purposes of grace for us are that there should be harmony between our wills and His; not two wills crossing one another, but two wills made one.

Has it become so with us as yet; can we say that it is our "meat" to do His will?

If not, the choice is before us now, and we must decide it.

"Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: and a curse if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known."—Deut. 11:26–28.

May the Lord enable us to settle the question at once and forever on the side of His will and not our own!

The process of consecration is shown us in Deuteronomy.

"This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and to hearken unto His voice: and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all His commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be a holy people unto the Lord thy God, as He hath spoken."—Deut. 26:16–19.

First, God's command in verse 16.

Second, our surrender in verse 17.

Third, God's response in verses 18 and 19.

When we have heard the call to surrender, and have avouched the Lord to be our God, and that we *will* walk in His ways and keep His commandments, He always avouches us to be His peculiar people, and declares that He will make us holy. And from that moment, He takes full possession of us. What *can* He do but take possession of the soul, that surrenders itself to Him? And of course He sanctifies that which is thus His own. The law of offerings to the Lord settles this as a primary fact, that everything which is given to Him, becomes by that very act something holy, set apart from all other things for His use alone.

"Notwithstanding, no devoted thing, that a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he hath, both of man and beast, and of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord."—Lev. 27:28.

Having once given it to the Lord, the devoted thing thenceforth was reckoned by all Israel as being His, and no one dared stretch forth a hand to retake it.

"He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed." —Lev. 27:33.

The giver might have felt his offering to be a very poor one, or to have been very poorly made; but having made it, the matter was taken out of his hands altogether, and the devoted thing, by God's own law, became "most holy unto the Lord." It was not the intention of the giver nor the quality of the gift that made it holy, but the holiness of the receiver. God's possession of anything sanctifies it. "The altar sanctifies the gift."

Having consecrated ourselves therefore to the Lord, we must from that moment reckon always that we *are* the Lord's, no matter what the "seemings" may be. We must refuse to admit a question or a doubt, but must choose always with an unfaltering purpose of heart to have no will but the will of God. We may not always *feel* as if we were consecrated, but we may always *choose* to be, and it is the attitude of our will, and not the state of our emotions, that is the vital thing in our soul life. If in my will I choose to be all the Lord's, then it is a fact that I *am* all His, no matter how I may feel about it. We need therefore to attend

only to the state of the will in this matter of consecration.

Let us make then a hearty renunciation of our wills to God, and let us from this time onward accept His will as our only portion.

I believe it is safest to come to a definite point in this matter, and to make a definite transaction of it.

A great many Christians acknowledge that they ought to do it, and are always meaning to do it; but because they do not come to the definite point of doing it, it is never really done. I may want and intend to give a gift to a friend with all the earnestness possible, but until I come to the point of actually giving it, it will still remain in my own possession.

If we mean to obey the command with which our lesson opens, when could we find a better time than now? Every hour that we delay we are holding ourselves back from blessing, and are grieving the heart of our Lord.

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"—I Chron. 29:5.

Laid on thine altar, Oh my Lord divine,
Accept my gift this day, for Jesus' sake;—
I have no jewels to adorn thy shrine,
Nor any world-famed sacrifice to make,—
But here I bring within my trembling hand
This will of mine,—a thing that seemeth small,
And only thou, sweet Lord, canst understand
How, when I yield thee this, I yield *mine all!*
Hidden therein, thy searching eye can see
Struggles of passion, visions of delight,

All that I love, or am, or fain would be,—
Deep loves, fond hopes, and longings infinite.
It hath been wet with tears and dimmed with sighs,
Clenched in my grasp, till beauty it hath none.
Now from thy footstool, where it vanquished lies,
The prayer ascendeth, May thy will be done.
Take it, oh Father, ere my courage fail;
And merge it so in thine own will, that e'en
If in some desperate hour my cries prevail,
And thou give back my gift, it may have been
So changed, so purified, so fair have grown,
So one with thee, so filled with peace divine,
I may not know or feel it as mine *own*,
But, gaining back my will, may find it *thine*.

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BIBLE READINGS.

VIII.

SUBJECT—BE CAREFUL FOR NOTHING.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—*Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God: and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*"—Phil. 4:6, 7.

Refer to the Revised Version and notice the change in the wording, as bringing out the true thought of this command, "In nothing be anxious." It is not meant to teach *carelessness*, but [illegible] *without anxiety.*

Notice the word "nothing" as covering all possible grounds for anxiety, both inward and outward. We are continually tempted to think it is our duty to be anxious about some things. Perhaps our thought will be, "Oh yes, it is quite right to give up all anxiety in a general way; and in spiritual matters of course anxiety is wrong; but there *are* things about which it would be a sin not to be anxious—about our children, for instance, or those we love, or about our church affairs and the cause of truth, or about our business matters. It would show a great want of right

feeling not to be anxious about such things as these." Or else our thoughts take the other tack, and we say to ourselves, "Yes, it is quite right to commit our loved ones and all our outward affairs to the Lord, but when it comes to our inward lives, our religious experiences, our temptations, our besetting sins, our growth in grace, and all such things, these we *ought* to be anxious about, for if we are not, they will be sure to be neglected."

To such suggestions, and to all similar ones, the answer is found in our text—"In NOTHING be anxious."

There is no getting away from this upon any subterfuge whatever. All the "seemings" may call for an apparently rightful anxiety, but God knows, and He says "nothing," and that settles it forever.

Our Lord develops this, and shows us the reason why we are not to be anxious, in His sermon on the mount.

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into

the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."—Matt. 6:25-34.

The illustrations here used are such as we can not misunderstand. The birds and the flowers are before us continually, as living examples of what real trust is. With them of course it is unconscious trust, but with us it must be an intelligent and conscious act. One who had learned this lesson, thus writes concerning it.

"Long years ago I was in the act of kneeling down before the Lord my God, when a little bird in the lightest, freest humor, came and perched near my window, and thus preached to me, all the while hopping from spray to spray, "Oh thou grave man, look on me and learn something. Thy God made me, and if thou canst conceive it, He loves me, and cares for me. Thou studiest Him in great problems which oppress and confound thee, and thou losest sight of one-half of His ways. Learn to see thy God, not in great mysteries only, but in me also. His burden on me is light, His yoke on me is easy, for I have only to submit to Him and trust. But thou makest yokes and burdens for thyself, which are grievous to be borne, because thou wilt neither submit nor trust.

I advise thee to follow my example, as thy Master commanded thee to do. Consider that the bird and the flower are as really from God as thou art; and that their lives are figures of something which He wants to see in thee also. Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them."

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."—I Peter 5:6, 7.

We all know the relief it is to lay off a care or a burden upon an earthly friend whom we trust. And just like this, only infinitely greater, is the relief that comes to the soul that has "cast all its care" upon the Lord.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."—Ps. 55:22.

Most Christians act like the man in the story who was walking along a road bowed down under a heavy burden, and was invited to ride by a kind friend, passing in a wagon. He accepted the invitation, but still kept the load on his shoulders, and when asked by his friend why he did not lay it on the floor of the wagon, replied: "Oh, it is a great deal to ask of you to carry me; I could not think of asking you to carry my burden too!"

"I have laid help upon one that is mighty."—Ps. 89:19.

That is, He, upon whom our cares are to be cast, is able to bear them, no matter how great

they may be. And yet we, who trust our choicest things often to our fellow-men and feel no fear, are afraid to trust our Lord.

"Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not."—Isa. 35:3, 4.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish."

"Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught. For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."—Isa. 41:10–14.

Think of the blessed confidence with which children cast their cares off upon their parents, without a fear, and recall how the parents love to have it so. How often a mother, when her child is tempted to be anxious or worried over the carrying out of a plan, will say, "There, darling, do not worry; leave it all to me and I will attend to it. Only trust me, and do as I say, and all will come right."

The only thing that a mother asks of her child is that it will yield to her care and obey her voice, and then she will take charge of all the rest. And just so it is with us and our God.

"If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land."—Isa. 1:19.

"Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it. And the

Lord heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"—Deut. 5:27-29.

"Then they said unto Jeremiah, The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the Lord our God."—Jer. 42:5, 6.

No mother *can* make all things go right for a disobedient child, and neither can God, in the very nature of things.

"But my people would not hearken to my voice and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels."—Ps. 81:11, 12.

If we *will* carry our own cares, and manage things in our own way, and walk "in our own counsels," sorrow and suffering can not fail to be the result.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."—Prov. 3:5, 6.

A little girl I knew, once brought a bag without a string to her mother to have one supplied. The mother agreed to do it, and threading a bodkin with a string, began to push it through the hem. The child had expected her mother to sew the string on at each side of the bag like a handle, and when she saw the bodkin and string both disappearing inside the hem she was puzzled and distressed.

She watched it a moment, and then said plaintively, "I think my mamma *might* put a string to my bag when she said she would." The mother looked up from her work re-assuringly and said, "Do not be troubled, darling, I am putting the string in all right." The child watched silently for a few more moments, and still no sign of the string appearing, as it was a little difficult to push through the narrow hem, the tears began to gather, and again the plaintive voice whispered, "I *thought* my mamma was a good mamma, and knew how to put on strings!" This time the mother saw there was a real need of comfort and she explained more fully. "See, darling," she said, "I do know how to put a string to a bag, and this is the best way. Just trust me and wait, and it will all come out right."

The child waited, and in a few moments the string was pushed through, a knot was tied, and the bag hung triumphantly on the little arm. The child looked thoughtfully at it, and then said, "Oh I see. It is just like Jesus. We give Him something to do, and He don't seem to be doing it right, and we are just going to worry; and then we think, 'Oh' Jesus knows how'; and we just trust Him and wait, and it comes out all right at last."

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late,

to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He giveth His beloved sleep."—Ps. 127:1, 2.

All our care is vain unless the Lord shall take the care also. And our worry is all a waste if He does take it. If a mother sits up late and rises early in order to bear her child's burdens, it is that the child may rest; and it would grieve her sorely to have the child also try to carry the burdens, as well.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. * * * * * Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."—John 14:1, 27.

Here the Master *commands* us not to be troubled or afraid. So that every time we yield to anxiety or fear we are disobeying Him.

There are three instances recorded where our Lord rebuked the little faith of His disciples; and yet in each case the circumstances were such as to make anxiety seem the natural and proper thing. They were certainly such as would cause great anxiety in many Christian hearts now.

First it was in a storm at sea.

"And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He said unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm."—Matt. 8:24–26.

Their fear led them to cry to Him, and yet He rebukes it. They ought to have known that, with Him aboard, they could not be other than

safe, and they ought to have rested in quiet confidence through the storm.

The second instance was when Peter found himself sinking in the waters.

"And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"—Matt. 14:29-31.

The third was when the disciples were troubled because they had no bread.

"Which when Jesus perceived, He said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?"—Matt. 16:8-10.

Here Jesus refers them to past experiences, when He had supplied all their need, as a reason why they should trust Him now. And I am sure He was grieved at the doubts of His disciples, just as we are grieved when those whom we love and whom we are trying to serve, are anxious and fearful about the things we have undertaken to do for them.

Three instances from the Old Testament will illustrate our lesson. The first is the story of Hagar when she was sent out from her home into the wilderness, apparently to die.

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

and the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bow-shot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink."—Gen. 21:14–19.

The second was when Elijah went, during the time of famine, to the house of the widow.

"So he arose, and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by Elijah."—I Kings 17:12–16.

The third was when the army of Syria encompassed the city where dwelt the man of God.

"And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of

the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."—II Kings 6:15–17.

The *causes* for anxiety in each of these cases were very great, but God was in each instance behind the scene with His perfect supply, and those who were afraid only needed to have their "eyes opened" to see it, and be delivered from all their fears.

What then is our part in this matter?

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass."—Ps. 37:3–7.

Seven things are mentioned here. Trust in the Lord; do good; delight thyself in Him; commit thy way unto Him; rest in Him; wait patiently for Him; and finally, fret not thyself.

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6:31–33.

Our part then is to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. That is, we must make it the first object of our lives to accept His will and to do it under all circumstances, and then simply trust Him for all the rest. No one can, in the very nature of things, be "careful for nothing,"

who is not fully surrendered to the Lord; for unless we are satisfied with His will, we can not trust Him to manage for us.

"O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto Him: but their time should have endured for ever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee."—Ps. 81:13–16.

There is no way therefore but the way of full surrender and simple childlike obedience. The Lord knows what is best, we do not; therefore we must leave the arrangements all to Him, and must say, "Thy will be done," about everything.

Remember, that all questioning is of the nature of doubt. It is called in the Bible, "speaking against God."

"Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, He smote the rock, that the water gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can He give bread also? can He provide flesh for His people? Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel: because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation: though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven."—Ps. 78:19–24.

Their sorrows came upon them because they did not trust. God was equal to the emergency, but they did not believe it, and their doubt grieved Him more than all their other sins.

"And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and

because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us or not?"—Exodus 17:7.

Here their questioning is called "tempting the Lord." And yet how common is just this sort of questioning among Christians, who little dream what a sin it is!

Let our Lord's own words close our lesson.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God: but even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."—Luke 12:6, 7.

In the face of *such* an assurance, who could doubt? The sparrows, and the hairs of our head, two strikingly insignificant and valueless things! And yet *they* are noticed and cared for. Then surely *we!*

THE SPARROW AND THE CHILD OF GOD.

"I am only a tiny sparrow,
A bird of low degree;
My life is of little value,
But the dear Lord cares for me.

"I have no barn nor storehouse,
I neither sow nor reap;
God gives me a sparrow's portion,
But never a seed to keep.

"I know there are many sparrows,
All over the world they are found,
But our heavenly Father knoweth
When one of us falls to the ground.

"Tho' small, we are never forgotten,
Tho' weak, we are never afraid;
For we know the dear Lord keepeth
The life of the creatures He made.

"I fly through the thickest forest,
I light on many a spray;
I have no chart nor compass,
But I never lose my way.

"And I fold my wings at twilight
Wherever I happen to be,
For the Father is always watching,
And no harm will come to me.

"I am only a little sparrow.
A bird of low degree,
But I know the Father loves me;
Have you less faith than we?"

BIBLE READINGS.

IX.

SUBJECT—GOD AS OUR MOTHER.

"Love divine, of such great loving,
Only mothers know the cost;
Cost of love, that, all love passing,
Gave itself to save the lost!"

FOUNDATION TEXT.—*As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.*"—Isa. 66:13.

We all know how a mother comforts her children, and have most of us tasted the sweetness of this comforting. Notice then, the "as" and "so" in this declaration, and accept the Divine Comforter and the heavenly comfort.

"Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted His people, and will have mercy on His afflicted."—Isa. 49:13.

"I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass."—Isa. 51:12.

"For the Lord shall comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make all her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."—Isa. 51:3.

"Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem."—Isa. 52:9.

God is called the "God of all comfort."

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to

comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort, wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—2 Cor. 1:3-4.

The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."—John 14:26.

Christ, when He was leaving His disciples, provided for their comfort when He should be gone.

"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever. * * * I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."—John 14:16-18.

But some will say, if God is like a mother, and comforts as mothers comfort, why is it that they are not comforted?

Have you never seen a little child sitting up stiff in the mother's lap, and refusing to be comforted, in spite of all her coaxing? And do we not often act in very much the same way?

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"—Matt. 23:37.

"In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not, my soul refused to be comforted."—Ps. 77:2.

Even a mother's love and tenderness cannot comfort a child that "refuses to be comforted;" and neither can God's. But no sorrow can be too great for His comfort to reach, if we will only take it.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of

death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."—Ps. 23:4.

"Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow."—Jer. 31:15.

If we will only listen believingly to His loving words: "Daughter be of good comfort;" we shall surely be comforted.

There are many other ways in which God is like a mother, and a comparison of these points will, I trust, open our eyes to see some truths concerning Him, which have been hitherto hidden from our gaze.

I. The mother runs when the child cries, and listens to the story of its sorrows and its needs, and relieves them.

And just so God.

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shalt answer; thou shalt cry, and he shalt say, Here I am."—Isa. 58:9.

The "Here I am" of the mother never fails to respond to the child's cry of "Mother, mother, where are you?" And neither does God's.

"I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill. I laid me down and slept; I awakened; for the Lord sustained me."—Ps. 3:4, 5.

How alert is the ear of the mother to the feeblest cry of her baby in the night. Let her be sleeping ever so soundly, and she will still hear the tiny cry. And how comforted and quieted the little one is when it realizes the mother's presence and can go to sleep in her care.

"In the day when I cried thou answeredest me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."—Ps. 138:3.

"I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and He gave ear unto me."—Ps. 77:1.

We are sometimes tempted to think that the Lord does not hear our prayers. But let the mother teach us. Could she possibly let the cry of her child go unheeded? And is the earthly mother more tender of her children, than the Heavenly Father is of His?

"He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry."—Ps. 147:9.

Since He hears the cry of the ravens, shall He not hear ours?

"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses."—Ps. 107:6, 13, 19, 28.

We are tempted to think that trouble shuts God's ears. In times of prosperity we rejoice to believe He hears us, but when the dark days come, we moan and complain because our prayers do not reach Him. Which cry catches the mother's ear the soonest, the cry of joy or the cry of sorrow? There can be but one answer to this. Every mother knows that the happy noises of her children in the nursery pass by often unnoticed, but the slightest cry of pain or trouble reaches her ear at once. And is a mother more alert to the suffering of her children than God?

"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."—Isa. 65:24.

Perhaps the child hardly knows why it cries,

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and cannot tell in any clear way what is the matter with it. But the mother does not refuse, because of this, to listen to its cry. She only seeks instead, all the more, to discover the cause of the discomfort for herself, and to remedy it. And surely, so must God.

"He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?"—Ps. 94:9.

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear."—Isa. 59:1.

Let us never grieve Him again by doubting that He hears us, however faint and feeble may be our cry. And let us be encouraged to ask as children do, for everything we need, sure that He will always hear, and will always answer (as some one has said), either in *kind* or in kindness.

"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."—John 16:24.

II. The mother carries the child in her arms and folds it to her bosom.

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom."—Isa. 40:11.

"And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."—Isa. 46:4.

Do we not act sometimes as though we thought we were carrying the Lord, rather than that He was carrying us? And do we not go bowed down under this fancied burden, when we ought to be resting peacefully in His arms? A baby, safe in its mother's arms, will sometimes make little clutches of fright, as though its safety depended

upon the strength of its tiny grasp of the mother's neck. But the mother knows how useless these are, and that it is *her* grasp, and not the baby's, that secures its safety. And surely this is true of us in the arms of God.

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them."—Dent. 33:27.

The baby carried in the arms of its mother knows no fear, even though their path may lie through a howling wilderness or through raging enemies. The mother's arms are its impregnable fortress. And the "everlasting arms" of God can be no less.

"In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and carried them all the days of old."—Isa. 63:9.

"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him."—Deut. 32:11, 12.

Even the eagle knows this secret of mother love. When the little eagles are old enough to learn to fly, she stirs up the nest and thrusts them out, that they may be driven to find the use of their wings. But she floats in the air under them, and watches them with eyes of love, and when she sees any little eaglet showing signs of weariness, she flies beneath it and spreads out her great strong mother wings to "bear it up" until it is rested and ready to fly again. And "so the Lord."

All races both of men and animals instinctively recognize the mother's right and duty to bear the burden of the child she has brought into the world. And Moses appealed to this universal instinct when he complained to the Lord concerning the children of Israel.

"Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?"—Num. 11:12.

And in rehearsing the wilderness wandering in "the plain over against the Red Sea," he again used the same figure to describe how the Lord had dealt with them.

"And in the wilderness where, thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place."—Deut. 1:31.

We cannot make any mistake then, in believing that the Lord carries us in His arms and folds us to His bosom with far more tenderness and watchful care than any mother ever could.

III. The mother wipes away the tears of her little one.

"For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."—Rev. 7:17.

Where do the little tearful darlings run for comfort, but to their mother? They know that no other hand can wipe away their tears as hers can. And have we not often seen children, when

they were hurt, holding in the cry until mother came, because they have felt instinctively that nobody but "mother" could sympathize or console?

Shall we not then let our God wipe away the tears from our eyes, and give us "joy for mourning," just as we used to let our mothers do, when we were in their loving care?

"For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling."—Ps. 116:8.

"He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it."—Isa. 25:8.

"For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee."—Isa. 30:19.

"Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer."—Ps. 6:8, 9.

When our Lord was on earth He was very tender of the tears of His people.

"And when the Lord saw her, He had compassison on her and said unto her, Weep not."—Luke 7:13.

"And all wept, and bewailed her: but He said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth."—Luke 8:52.

Just as the mother says "Darling, do not cry," so He says to us, "Weep not." Our tears give Him grief.

"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled."—John 11:33.

Perhaps we do not remember this enough, and indulge ourselves sometimes in weeping, when our Lord would fain wipe away our tears. Let us

consider this, and see if for His sake, as for our mother's sake, we cannot dry our eyes, and try to bear cheerfully the sorrows He permits to come upon us. Have we never known what it was to restrain our sorrow that we might not grieve a loved one? And shall we not sometimes do this for our Lord?

"But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying."—Isa. 65: 18, 19.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."—Rev. 21:4.

IV. The mother watches over her children in sickness, and does all she can to comfort and to heal.

"The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."—Ps.4 1:3.

"If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men)."—1 Kings 8:37–39.

Concerning our Lord it was declared that He had borne not our sins only, but our sicknesses as well.

"When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might

be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matt.8:16,17.

The story of His life on earth was one continual record of His tenderness with sickness, and His power and willingness to heal.

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness among the people." Matt.4:23.

"And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew Him, and ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was. And whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment: and as many as touched Him were made whole."—Mark 6:54-56.

How literally this bearing of our sicknesses is to be taken, is a subject which we cannot consider here. There is a great difference of opinion on the matter. But of this I am sure, that all who trust Him, will find that the tenderest mother's love and care in sickness is only a faint picture of the love and care that He will bestow.

V. The mother bears with the naughty child as no one else can, and finds excuses for it, and loves it freely through all.

"And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto His disciples, Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Matt. 9:10-13.

Other people love us when we are good, our

mothers love us when we are naughty. And God is like our mothers.

"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."—Rom. 5:8.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."—1 Tim. 1:15.

Our mothers do not love our *sins*, but they love *us*, even when we are sinners; and they love us enough to try to save us from our sins. And this is like God.

"There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice
That is more than liberty.

"There's no place where earthly sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven;
There's no place where earthly failings
Have such kindly judgment given."

Only mothers can be just to their children, for they alone know their temptations. And only God can be just toward us, for "He alone knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust."

VI. The mother will lay down her life for her child. And our Lord laid down His life for us.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and, the wolf catcheth them, and scatteroth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep."—John 10:11–15.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."—1 John. 3:16.

All nature teaches us this law of the self-sacrifice of motherhood. Even the wild tiger-mother yields to its power. A late writer has said concerning this: "It is a tiger's impulse to resent an injury. Pluck her by the hair, smite her on the flank, she will leap upon and rend you. But to resent an injury is not her strongest impulse. Watch those impotent kitten creatures playing with her. They are so weak, a careless movement of her giant paw would destroy them; but she makes no careless movement. They have caused her a hundredfold the pain your blow produced; yet she does not render evil for evil. These puny mites of helpless impotence she strokes, with love's light in her eyes; she licks the shapeless forms of her tormentors, and, as they plunge at her, each groan of her anguish is transformed by love into a whinney of delight. She moves her massive head in a way which shows that He, who bade you turn the other cheek, created her. When strong enough to rise, the terrible creature goes forth to sacrifice herself for her own. She will starve that they may thrive. She is terrible for her little ones, as Christ was terrible for His. He who made her, taught her the secret of motherhood."

The little Bantam hen has learned the same secret, and will spread her tiny wings and rush to her death, if her little chicks are in danger.

In all ranges of being, the beautiful law of

motherhood leads to the grandeur of an utter self-sacrifice. And He who conceived and created motherhood, can not Himself do less than the mothers He has made.

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."—Rom. 5:6.

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."—1 Thes. 5:9,10.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."—2 Cor. 5:14,15.

"When the polar bear lays down her life for the cub that cannot live without her; when the leopard gives herself to death in defence of her impotent whelp; the Arctic Circle and the Lybian zone unite in protestation that the spirit of Nature is the spirit of Christ."

VII. The mother holds the hand of her child to lead it in the right path, and lifts it over the rough places, that it may not stumble.

"For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."—Ps. 91:11, 12.

"He will keep the feet of His saints."—1 Sam. 2:9.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."—Jude, 24.

"For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and keep thy foot from being taken."—Prov. 3:26.

It is the mother who holds the child, not the child the mother. It is the mother who watches the path, and lifts the baby feet over the stones

and snares that obstruct the way. The responsibility is all hers. The child has only to abandon itself to her leading, and trust her fully. And our God "knoweth the way we take," and will "direct all our steps," if we but commit ourselves to his care.

"He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber."—Ps. 121:3.

"Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net."—Ps. 25:15.

"He brought me up also out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."—Ps. 40:2.

"Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip."—Ps. 18:35, 36.

"Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."—Ps. 17:5.

No matter how much the child may resist the mother's leading, or wander from her loving clasp, still she is always ready again to take hold of its hand and lead it.

"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."—Ps. 139:9,10.

"For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee."—Isa. 41:13.

VIII. The mother is always ready to feed her hungry child, and would starve herself before she would suffer the child to starve.

"The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."—Ps. 145:15, 16.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."—Matt. 5:6.

"For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."—Ps. 107:9.

It is not always the food the child asks for, that the wise mother gives. Sometimes such food would be fatal to its health. But it is always the food that is best for it, up to the mother's light and ability to procure. And we may be perfectly sure that our God always gives us that which is best, whether it is what we ask for or not. Therefore we must be satisfied.

"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips."—Ps. 63:5

"If a son shall ask bread of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!"—Luke 11:11-13.

What our Father gives may *look* to us like a "serpent" or a "scorpion," but, since He gives it, we may be sure it cannot be anything but just the best thing for us. For if parents "know how" to give good gifts how "much more" must He?

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; not yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? * * * Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—Matt. 6:25, 26, 31-33.

The child does not have to supply or prepare its own food; this is the mother's business. And

all the child has to do is to eat and live, without care and without cost.

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."—Isa. 55:1, 2.

IX. The mother takes pleasure in her child, and loves to dress it beautifully and to keep it clean.

"For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation."—Ps. 149:4.

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."—Isa. 61:10.

What joy in the world is equal to the joy of a mother in her child! And what employment is sweeter to her than to prepare dainty garments for its adorning.

And yet it is hard for the children themselves to believe this. They do not know the mother's heart, and they cannot enter into her joy in them.

And it is the same with us toward our God. We cannot believe that He *can* take pleasure in such poor miserable creatures as we are. We know we delight in Him, but it seems impossible that He should delight in us. And yet, in spite of all the child's ignorance of it, the mother *does* rejoice in her little ones; and in spite of our doubts and fears God does rejoice in us.

"The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy."—Ps. 147:11.

Can not we therefore, who understand something of the mother's heart towards her children, understand also something of the heart of God towards us?

"Yea, I swear unto thee and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badger's skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thine hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God."—Ezek. 16:8–14.

"The King's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework."—Ps. 45:13, 14.

The child does not make its own clothes, but leaves them all for the mother.

"And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lillies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?."—Matt. 6:28–30.

It would grieve the mother to see her little one anxious and troubled about its clothing; and it grieves our God to see us. Moreover, all our efforts to clothe ourselves are grievous failures, just as the child's would be.

"And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life."—Jer. 4:30.

Only the Lord can clothe us; and He only can make us clean.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins may be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—Isa. 1:18.

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His son cleanseth us from all sin."—1 John 1:7.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—1 John 1:9.

X. The mother feels the hurts and sufferings of her child as though they were her own.

"In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them: and He bore them and carried them all the days of old."—Isa. 63:9.

Even though the affliction may be the result of sin, still the mother grieves over it and longs to help it. Strangers may say "It serves you right;" but no good mother ever could.

"For we have not an high priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."—Heb. 4:15.

"For He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye."—Zech. 2:8.

XI. The mother can not forget or forsake her child. And yet even this *may* be possible with a human mother, but with God never!

"But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I

have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."—Isa. 49, 14–16.

"Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength."—Isa, 40:27–29.

Christians sometimes talk as though God had forsaken them; but this is impossible, for He has said "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."—Heb. 13:5, 6.

"Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord my God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. * * * * And the Lord, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed."—Deut. 31:6, 8.

The child in delirium thinks its mother has forsaken it, although all the time she is close beside it. And we, in the delirium of our doubts and fears, think as falsely, that God has forsaken us.

"For the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people."—1 Sam. 12:22.

"And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel."—1 Kings 6:13.

"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee nor forsake thee."—Josh. 1:5.

"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them."—Isa. 41:17.

XII. The mother stays beside her child when

it is in danger, even though all others may abandon it.

"I am the good shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."—John 10:11–13.

A hired nurse, let her be paid ever so highly, may flee in a moment of danger, and leave her nursling to its fate. But danger only makes the mother keep closer to her helpless little one. The mother-hen, who generally flies at the first approach of danger, will stand as firm and dauntless as a lion, if she has her little chickens to guard.

Have we ever dared to think of our Lord as though He were a "hireling" who fled when danger approached?

Have we not even sometimes been more ready to trust earthly "hirelings," than to trust Him?

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble."—Ps. 9:9.

"For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me upon a rock."—Ps. 27:5.

XIII. If the child is lost, the mother leaves all else to seek it, and never gives up "till she finds it."

"And He spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when

he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."—Luke 15:3–10.

"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."—Matt. 18:11–14.

"For thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day."—Ezek. 34:11, 12.

What, then, is the summing up of the whole matter? Simply this: If God is only as good as the mothers He has made, where can there be any room left for a thought of care or of fear? And if He is as much truer to the ideal of motherhood than an earthly mother can be, as His infiniteness is above hers, then what oceans and continents of bliss are ours for the taking!

Shall we not take it?

"Learn of this mother to be no more beguiled,
For, mindful of the mother heart which I have given;
She in my goodness hath abiding faith:

And whatso'er of Me another saith,
Although the words may *seem* to come from
Heaven;
She ponders well, and tries it by the test,
Of that which in her own heart she finds best."

BIBLE READINGS.

X.

SUBJECT—AS A LITTLE CHILD.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—*And they brought unto Him also infants, that He would touch them: but when His disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.*"—Luke 18:15–17.

Notice that in verse fifteen the word used to describe the little children whom our Lord here takes as patterns for us, is "infants;" and in verse sixteen, He says concerning them, "of *such* is the kingdom of God."

"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."—Luke 10:21.

"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. 18:1–4.

It is plainly therefore *little* children, "infants," who are to be our patterns; not grown-up chil-

dren, nor half-grown ones; not precocious children, nor children who have old heads on young shoulders. But real, honest, downright *little* children, who have all the characteristics of what George Macdonald calls "childness," which means the guileless, impulsive, tender, trustful, self-forgetting, uncareful spirit of a *little* child.

It is of vital importance then, that we should get a true idea of what it means to be a little child, and of what are the characteristics of ideal childhood, in order that we may know what must be our characteristics, if we would become "as little children."

I. A little child takes no anxious thought for the supply of its needs, but leaves all the care of providing to its parents. And we likewise must take no anxious thought for the supply of our needs; but must leave all the care of providing to our Heavenly Father.

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"—Matt. 6:25, 26.

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—Matt. 6:31–33.

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."—1 Pet. 5:7.

II. A little child lives in the present moment, and leaves the planning of its future to the mother's care.

We also must live in the present moment and leave our future to God.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."—Matt. 6:34.

III. A little child asks for everything it wants, without ceremony, and in a joyous confidence of being heard and answered.

We also must ask in unceremonious child-like confidence for everything we want, sure of being heard and answered, according to God's divine wisdom.

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."—Phil. 4:6.

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."—John 15:7.

"Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."—Mark 11:24.

"Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"—Matt. 7:7-11.

IV. The little child runs to its mother for comfort in all its troubles.

We also must go to our Lord for comfort in all our troubles.

"For thus saith the Lord, Behold I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem."—Isa. 66:12, 13.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort: who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—2 Cor. 1:3, 4.

V. The little child looks to its father and mother for deliverance from all its enemies.

And likewise we must look to our God for deliverance from ours.

"For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper."—Ps. 72:12.

"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses."—Ps. 107:6.

"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."—Ps. 34:6.

"Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered. They trusted in thee, and were not confounded."—Ps. 22:4,5.

VI. A little child rests in the mother's arms when it is weary.

And likewise we must rest our weary souls in the arms of our God.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. 11:28.

"And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places."—Isa. 32:18.

"For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."—Isa. 30:15.

VII. The little child asks questions about everything it wants to know, and believes all that its mother says, without question or doubt.

And likewise we must ask our Lord about

everything in which we lack wisdom, and must believe all that He says with implicit confidence.

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."—Jas. 1:5–7.

"Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."—Prov. 2:3–6.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."—John 14:26.

VIII. The little child expects its father and mother to fight all its battles, and is always confident that they can conquer.

And likewise we must expect our Lord to fight all our battles, and must be confident in His certain victory.

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."—Exod. 14:13,14.

"When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, and shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."—Deut. 20:1–4.

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give

place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."—Rom. 12:19.

"Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies."—Ps. 60:12.

"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name."—Exod. 15:1-3.

IX. The little child takes refuge in its mother's arms when an enemy approaches, and is afraid of nothing in her presence.

And likewise we must make the Lord our refuge, and must fear nothing in His presence.

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them."—Deut. 33:27.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident."—Ps. 27:1-3.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."—Ps. 46:1-3.

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."—Ps. 91:2-10.

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."—Ps. 9:9, 10.

X. The little child believes its parents can do everything and that nothing is too hard for them.

And we must believe that all things are possible to our Father in Heaven, and that nothing can thwart His blessed will.

"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what He had promised, He was able also to perform."—Rom. 4:20,21.

"Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible unto you."—Matt. 17:19,20.

"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."—Mark 9:23.

"And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yea, Lord. Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you."—Matt. 9:28,29.

XI. The little child is never surprised at the greatness of any gift that its parents may offer, nor ever hesitates from a foolish mistrust, to accept the most lavish bestowments.

And likewise we must not be hindered by a foolish mistrust from accepting eagerly and gladly the lavish gifts which our Lord is continually seeking to bestow upon us.

"I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."—Ps. 81:10.

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ."—Rom. 5:17.

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."—1 Cor. 2:9,10.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."—Eph. 3:20,21.

XII. The little child never doubts the love and care of its mother, and would be surprised beyond measure should there be any lack.

And we must never doubt the love and care of our Lord, nor be surprised at His tender watchfulness of all our needs.

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"—Matt. 6:30.

"Which when Jesus perceived, He said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?"—Matt. 16:8–10.

"And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto Him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was

a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?"—Mark 4:35–40.

"Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."—John 14:1–3.

"Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can He give bread also? can He provide flesh for His people? Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation: though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven."—Ps. 78:19–24.

XIII. The little child is content with the arrangements its mother makes for it, and asks no questions.

And we likewise must be content with our Lord's arrangements for us, and ask no questions, nor murmer at the dispensations He may permit.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."—Heb. 13:5.

"Nay but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"—Rom. 9:20.

"And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? * * * * And He called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the chiding of the

children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?"—Exod. 17:1–3, 7.

"Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."—1 Cor. 10:10,11.

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."—Phil. 4:11, 12.

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."—1 Tim. 6:6–8.

XIV. Little children grow as the flowers grow, without taking any thought about their growing. And we must "consider the lilies how they grow" and grow like them, without anxiety or strain.

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."—Matt. 6:27–29.

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."—1 Peter 2:2.

"I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon."—Hosea 14:5,6.

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that he planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."—Ps. 92:12–14.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."—Jer. 17:7,8.

XV. The little child comes with boldness into its mother's presence, and never doubts her loving welcome.

And likewise we also must come with boldness into the presence of our Lord, without a question or doubt of His loving welcome.

"For we have not a high priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Heb. 4:15, 16.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, His flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised."—Heb. 10:19–23.

"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."—Eph. 3:12.

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."—1 John 4:16–18.

"So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."—Heb. 13:6.

XVI. The little child boasts about its parents, and wants to tell everyone of their goodness.

And we must "make our boast" in the Lord, and tell of His wonderful goodness, wherever we can.

"I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O

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magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together."—Ps. 34:1-3.

"Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. Praise the Lord with harps: sing unto Him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto Him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise."—Ps. 33:1-3.

"In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever."—Ps. 44:8.

"Howbeit, Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel."—Mark. 5:19,20.

"I will mention the loving kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses."—Isa. 63:7.

XVII. Little children are punished when they are naughty, and are subdued and softened by the punishment, and kiss the hand that smites.

And likewise the Lord chastises us when we are naughty, and we must accept our chastisements with thankful submission, letting them work in our spirits the purposed blessing.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."—Rev. 3:19.

"Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. For He maketh sore, and bindeth up: He woundeth, and His hands make whole."—Job. 5:17, 18.

"Blessed is the man whom thou chasteneth, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law."—Ps. 94:12.

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son

is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."—Heb. 12:5-11.

XVIII. Little children have teachable spirits, and are eager to learn.

We also must have teachable spirits, and must be eager to be taught of God.

"A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke."—Prov.13:1.

"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way."—Ps. 119:103, 104.

"Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish."—Prov. 12:1.

"O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me."—Ps. 119:97-102.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."—John 14:26.

"I have yet many things to say unto you but ye can not bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.,'—John 16:12, 13.

XIX. The little child has a ready foot to run the mother's errands.

We also must have ready feet to run on our Father's business.

"I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart."—Ps. 119:32.

"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments."—Ps. 119:59, 60.

XX. Little children have obedient spirits, and do what their parents desire, and not what they may think best themselves.

And we likewise must have obedient spirits to do God's will, and not our own, no matter how much better our own plans may seem to us.

"And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king."—1 Sam. 15:22, 23.

"But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward."—Jer. 7:23,24.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."—Matt. 7:21.

"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell: and the ruin of that house was great."—Luke 6:46–49.

"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."—1 Pet. 1:14–16.

XXI. Little children instinctively realize the fact that they have nothing to do but to obey their parents, and leave all else to them.

And likewise we also must intelligently realize the blessed fact that we have nothing to do but to obey our Lord and to leave all else to His care.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."—Eccl. 12:13.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—Matt. 6:33.

Christ was the pattern of this Divine childhood.

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."—Isa. 9:6.

I. He did nothing of Himself.

"Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."—John 5:19.

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."—John 5:30.

II. He said nothing of Himself.

"Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things."—John 8:28.

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath

one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."—John 12:48-50.

III. He walked in childlike obedience.

"And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart."—Luke 2:51.

"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work."—John 4:34.

"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me."—John 6:38.

IV. He referred everything to His Father.

"Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on Him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth Him that sent me."—John 12:44, 45.

"Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"—John 14:8, 9.

"Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me."—John 8:42.

Since Christ is our example, we must walk as He walked, with the spirit and ways of childhood.

"For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps."—1 Pet. 2:21.

"He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."—1 John 2:6.

AS A LITTLE CHILD.

"Except ye become as little children ye can not enter the kingdom of heaven."

"As a little child, as a little child!
Then how can I enter in?
I am scarred, and hardened, and soul-defiled,
With traces of sorrow and sin.
Can I turn backward the tide of years
And wake my dead youth at my will?"
"Nay, but thou canst, with thy grief and thy fears,
Creep into my arms and be still."

"I know that the lambs in the heavenly fold
Are sheltered and kept in thy heart;
But I, I am old, and the gray from the gold
Has bidden all brightness depart.
The gladness of youth, the faith and the truth,
Lie withered or shrouded in dust."
"Thou'rt emptied at length of thy treacherous strength;
Creep into my arms now, and trust."

"Is it true? can I share with the little ones there
A child's happy rest on Thy breast?"
"Aye, the tenderest care will answer thy prayer,
My love is for thee as the rest.
It will quiet thy fears, will wipe away tears,
Thy murmurs shall soften to psalms,
Thy sorrows shall seem but a feverish dream,
In the rest, in the rest in my arms.

"Thus tenderly held, the heart that rebelled,
Shall cling to my hand, though it smite;
Shall find in my rod the love of its God,
My statutes its songs in the night.
And whiter than snow shall the stained life grow,
'Neath the touch of a love undefiled,
And the throngs of forgiven at the portals of heaven,
Shall welcome one more little child."

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

BIBLE READINGS.

XI.

SUBJECT—THE THREE F'S.—FACT, FAITH, FEELING—THE DIVINE ORDER OR THE HUMAN—WHICH?

There is in all things a Divine order, and a human order, and very frequently these two are opposed to one another.

In the three F's we are considering, this is strikingly the case.

God's order reads thus;

I. Fact.
II. Faith.
III. Feeling.

In man's order this is reversed;

I. Feeling.
II. Faith.
III. Fact.

That is; in the divine order God gives us first the facts of His salvation; then we believe these facts; and then as a consequence, we have the feelings suitable to the facts believed.

But man reverses this order, and says, "I must have the feeling first, and then I can believe in that feeling, and thus I shall get hold of the facts."

Of course this is absurd; but it is a very common temptation, and is the cause of most of the pitiful uncertainty and doubt that characterizes so much of the experiences of Christians.

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."—1 John 5:11-13.

Here we have an illustration of the Divine order.

First we have the "record" of the facts, that "God hath given to us eternal life," and that this life is in His Son; and further, that "He that hath the Son hath life." Then we are told that if we believe these facts, we shall "know" that we have the eternal life spoken of.

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son."—1 John 5:10.

Notice it is "he that believeth" that hath the "witness," not he that doubteth. Most people read this passage as though it said "he that doubteth shall have the witness, and then he can believe." They put the witness first and the believing second, but God's order is, first believe, and then have the witness. And we can never reverse this order; for it is in the very nature of things, as well as in the Book. In all earthly

things we require the fact before the feeling. No man starts on a journey at hap-hazard, and then shuts his eyes to "feel" whether or not he is going the right way. No man sits down to "feel" whether he has money in the bank with which to pay his debts. "Give us the facts" is always our cry in earthly things. But when it comes to spiritual things, we reverse this order entirely, and instead of asking "What is the fact?" we say plaintively, "How do I feel?"

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?—Ps. 137: 1-4.

No one can sing a song of rejoicing unless the cause for rejoicing has first been ascertained to be a fact. The Israelites did not say, "We will feel happy and sing songs, and then we shall be in our own land." We cannot conceive of any one in his senses doing such a silly thing. And yet many a child of God says something very nearly akin to this. "If I could only *feel* happy, then I could believe that God is my Father and that He loves me." We can only know that God loves us by His *saying* so, not by our *feeling* so. We can only know that our earthly friends love us from their own words. We believe them when they tell us that they love us, and then we feel happy because we believe it.

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."—Ps. 126:1-3.

When their captivity was turned, the Israelites rejoiced without any effort. They *could not* sing songs of joy in the strange land, but as soon as they were at home again, their tongues were filled with singing. And we are like them; we *can not* rejoice until we also know that our captivity has been turned; but when we do know it, our mouths like theirs are filled with laughter and our tongues with singing, without any effort.

"Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."—Ps. 63:7.

"O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvelous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory. The Lord hath made known His salvation: His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King."—Ps. 98:1-6.

"For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the Lord shall be known toward His servants, and His indignation toward His enemies."—Isa. 66:12-14.

"And when ye see this your heart shall rejoice." We need to "see" our blessings before

we can rejoice over them. The Israelites could see their blessings with their outward eyes, for they were visible and tangible things. But we must see ours with our inward eyes, for they are invisible and spiritual. Our knowledge concerning them can only come by *faith*, while theirs came by *sight*. But faith is inward seeing. To believe a thing on sufficient authority is as real as seeing it

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."—Rom. 5:1, 2.

"But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee."—Ps. 5:11.

"For our heart shall rejoice in Him; because we have trusted in His holy name."—Ps. 33:21.

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. For the Lord is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our King."—Ps. 89:15–18.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."—1 Pet. 1:3–6.

Our feelings of joy come from our believing joyful facts. The facts do not exist because we are joyful, but we are joyful, on account of the existence of the facts.

Spiritual facts can only be known by believing God's witness concerning them.

"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son."—1 John 5:9.

If we are willing to "receive the witness of men" concerning the facts which come within the range of man's knowledge (and of course we do this every moment), we surely ought to be willing to receive the "witness of God" concerning the facts that come within the range of His knowledge. We could not have a moment's peace in our life among men, if we refused to receive their "witness;" and we can never have a moment's peace in our life with God as long as we refuse to receive His witness. Suppose we should meet every statement of our fellow men with the assertion that we could not believe what they said until we had sat down and looked inside to see whether we *felt* it was true! And yet this is just the way many treat God!

"He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth; and no man receiveth His testimony. He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true."—John 3:31–33.

What *we* could not know because we are "of the earth," Christ knew because He came from heaven; and what He hath seen and heard, He has testified to us. We can only know of heavenly things therefore by believing His words.

"Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on Him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth Him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."—John 12: 44-50.

We see therefore that in all our relations with God, we must follow His divine order of, fact first, faith second, and feeling last, if we would be right.

Let us then trace this divine order in regard to some of the most vital points of Christian experience.

I. That God loves us.

1. The fact.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3: 16.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."—1 John 4: 10.

2. The faith.

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."—1 John 4: 16.

3. The feeling.

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."—Rom. 5: 5.

The great torment of many Christian hearts is that they do not *feel* as if God loved them or they

loved Him. The trouble is that they are beginning at the wrong end, the end of feeling instead of the end of faith. We never *can* love Him, until we first know that He loves us.

"We love Him, because He first loved us."—1 John 4:19.

We are all the time reversing this, and thinking that He will love us if we will first love Him. But it is a hopeless attempt; love must begin with God, and we can never originate it ourselves.

II. The forgiveness of sins.

1. The fact.

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."—Acts 13:38.

2. The faith.

"And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."—Acts 13:39.

3. The feeling.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."—Rom. 5:1, 2.

The fact is preached to us. We believe the word preached. And as a result we have peace.

But some may ask, Is the fact true until we believe it? Are my sins forgiven before I believe that they are? Certainly they are. In the heart of God there is always forgiveness, like the mother, whose forgiveness always awaits the sin of her child. But this forgiveness can not reach us until we believe in it. Our faith does not induce God to forgive us, it is not in any sense the cause

of our forgiveness. Faith is only the hand by which we lay hold experimentally of the forgiveness that is already ours in Christ.

"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake."—1 John 2:12.

"Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."—Luke 24:45–47.

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."—2 Cor. 5:18–21.

God *is* reconciled to us; He *has* forgiven us; our sins do not separate Him from us, but only us from Him. We are not reconciled to Him, it may be, but He is always reconciled to us.

Therefore our forgiveness is a fact in the mind and heart of God towards us, before we believe it; and we do not make it true by believing it, but we believe it because it is true. And peace is the result of the believing, not the believing the result of the peace.

II. Eternal life.

1. The fact.

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."—1 John 5:11.

2. The faith.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever

believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."—John 3: 14, 15.

3. The feeling.

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."—1 Pet. 1: 8, 9.

God has given us eternal life in Christ. Christ is, as it were, a great reservoir of life, out of whom each one of us may take by faith all of life that we need.

"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. * * * But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."—John 1: 4, 12.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."—1 John 1: 1, 2.

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Rom. 6: 23.

We do not have to create this life, nor earn it, nor buy it. We can only receive it as a gift, just as we received our human life. And our receiving is by faith; or in other words by believing that it *has been* given, and that we *have* it.

"And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."—John 6: 40.

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"—John 11: 25, 26.

III. The gift of the Holy Spirit.

1. The fact.

"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the

Spirit of truth; whom the world can not receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."—John 14: 16, 17.

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."—Acts 2: 32, 33.

2. The faith.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"—John 7: 37-39.

3. The feeling.

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."—John 4: 14.

On the day of Pentecost this gift of the Holy Ghost was given to the church. It was "shed forth" upon the church, as the sunlight is shed forth upon the world.

"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."—Acts 2: 14-18.

Not only on a few disciples, but "upon all flesh" was the Spirit shed forth, and all who will receive the gift, may have it.

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles,

Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."—Acts 2; 37–39.

The Holy Spirit, like the sunlight, is free to all. The world is full of sunlight, but the plant in a cellar dwindles and dies for lack of it. What is needed is not a new outpouring of the sunlight, but the placing of the plant in the sunlight which is already poured out. It is not that God must give anything more, but that we must receive more of that which He has already given.

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."—Eph. 5: 18.

"Be filled" yourselves, with that Spirit which fills all the earth around you. Do not ask for more of the Spirit, but let the Spirit have more of you.

This is the fact; that the Holy Spirit *is* given. Faith believes this, and by believing receives; and after faith comes the conscious sealing.

"This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"—Gal. 3: 2.

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, *after* that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."—Eph. 1:13.

IV. The presence of God.

1. The fact.

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world. Amen."—Matt. 28:20.

"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit! or whither shall I

flee from thy presence! If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb."—Ps. 139:7-13.

2. The faith.

"The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."—Ps. 46: 7.

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God: in Him will I trust."—Ps. 91: 2.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."—Ps. 46:1.

3. The feeling.

"Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."—Ps. 46:2.

"For He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."—Heb. 13:5,6.

What "He hath said," we may indeed "boldly say," therefore our faith must assert unswervingly the fact of God's abiding presence with us. And as a result of this faith we shall sooner or later realize a conscious feeling of His presence. He is not present because we *feel* it, but we feel it because we believe the fact of His presence.

This divine order of the three F's, i. e., first fact, second faith, third feeling, applies to every aspect and every stage of our experience in heavenly things.

No amount of feeling is good for anything unless it is the result of faith in a divine fact;

which fact is true anyhow, whether we believe it or not.

Let us get our facts then. And let us at once and forever give up all idea that our feelings are the test and measure of these facts.

The facts, when believed in, will control our feelings; but no amount of feeling, let it be ever so fervent, can control the facts, so much as a feather's weight.

A Christian who had had a very joyous experience in a meeting, came to the minister the next day looking very downcast and said, "In your meeting yesterday I was filled with joy, and I thought I should never be sad again; but now it is all gone and I am in the depths. What is the matter with me? Has God forsaken me?" "Did you ever pass through a tunnel?" asked the minister. "Certainly I have," replied the man, "but I do not see what that has to do with it." "When you were in the tunnel did you think the sun had been blotted out and existed no longer?" continued the minister. "No, of course I did not," said the man. "I knew the sun was in the sky just the same, although I could not see it just then. But what has that to do with my experience?" "Were you very much depressed while you were going through the dark tunnel?" "No I was not, I knew I should get out into the light again soon." "And did you get out?" asked the minister. "I am out

now!" exclaimed the man joyfully. "I see what you mean. The facts are just the same, no matter how I feel, and I am to rejoice in the facts not in my feelings, I see! I see!"

Let us reject then the clamorings of our feelings which declare that God's facts are but dreams of the imagination, and let us take our stand without wavering on the unalterable verities of "God's record," receiving His "witness" with at least as much confidence as we accord to the witness of men, and resting our souls absolutely on "that which He hath testified."

"In hope, against all human hope,
Self desperate, I believe;
Thy quickening word shall raise me up,
Thou wilt thy Spirit give.

The thing surpasses all my thought,
But faithful is my Lord;
Through unbelief I stagger not,
For God hath spoke the word.

Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks at that alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries—'It shall be done!'

BIBLE READINGS.

XII.

SUBJECT—OUR RELATIONSHIPS TO THE LORD.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—"*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*"—*Phil. 3: 12.*

Some one has said that the only thing necessary for the children of God to do in order to enter into full possession of their inheritance, is simply to *be* what they *are*. That is, in other words, to "apprehend that for which they are apprehended" of Christ Jesus. In all human relations this principle holds good. If a man is a king in fact, he must *be* one in actual outward recognition, or his kingship avails him nothing. If a man really possesses wealth, he must act and live as a wealthy man, or his riches are of no worth to him. In all conditions of life, our success depends upon this little point of *being* what we really are.

"For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."—Eph. 5:8.

You *are* children of light, now walk as such. That is; *be* what you *are*.

In our relations with God this is especially necessary, because these all exist in the unseen spiritual region, and can of course only be real to us as our faith makes them so, It is essential then to our peace, and also to our well-being, that we should intelligently apprehend and live out that for which we are apprehended of Christ Jesus. That is, we must find out what are our relationships to God, and then must *be* just what they are. For instance, if God says I am His child, then I must *be* a child; if He says I am a king, then I must *be* kingly; and so on in all the relations which exist in the soul life.

It is of vital importance therefore that we should find out what we really *are*, in order that we may know what we ought to *be*. And this we can do by looking at the names by which He calls us.

"But He that entereth in by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep. To Him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear His voice: and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."—John 10: 2, 3.

He "calleth His own sheep by name." God's naming always means character or position. He has no fancy nor arbitrary names. Just as we never call a man a farmer unless he is a farmer, so likewise when God calls us by a name, it is because we *are* that which He calls us. The names He has given us, therefore, will tell us what we are.

"Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee."—Gen. 17: 5.

(Abram means "father of height," and Abraham means "father of multitudes.")

"Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send."—1 Sam. 25:25.

(Nabal means, a "fool.")

"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."—Gen. 32:28.

(Jacob means, a "supplanter," and Israel means, "a prince with God.")

"But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine."—Isa. 43:1.

Let us see then what are some of the names by which God has called us, that we may learn to know what we really are in His sight.

I. He calls us His "children."
II. He calls us His "heirs."
III. He calls us His "friends."
IV. He calls us His "brethren."
V. He calls us His "sheep."
VI. He likens us to "birds."
VII. He likens us to "chickens."
VIII. He calls us "branches of the vine."
IX. He likens us to "trees."
X. He likens us to "flowers."
XI. He calls us "clay."
XII. He calls us "vessels."
XIII. He calls us "instruments."
XIV. He calls us His "treasure."

XV. He calls us His "bride."

XVI. Finally, He declares that we are *one* with Himself.

In every one of these names there is included a whole world of comfort to those who consent to *be* what they are thus *called.*

We will look at them a little in detail, and see what is really included in this naming.

I. He calls us His *children.*

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."—Gal. 3:26.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God."—Rom. 8:16.

Let us *be* children then in the blessed ease, and security, and childlikeness of childhood. Let us take the children's happy place of freedom from care, and from anxiety; and let us live as the children do, in the present moment, without taking thought for to-morrow.

II. He calls us His *heirs.*

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."—Rom. 8:17.

"Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."—Gal. 4:7.

Let us *be* heirs then in the sense of entering into possession of our inheritance. No earthly heir fails or delays to take possession of that which he inherits. He may be amazed at the good fortune which has befallen him, he may feel himself to be utterly unworthy of it; but nevertheless, if he is the heir, he takes possession of his inheritance,

and rejoices in it. And we who are declared to be the heirs of God, must do the same.

III. He calls us His *friends.*

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."—John 15:15.

"And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the Friend of God."—Jas. 2:23.

Let us *be* His friends then in the best that we know of friendship. Let us trust Him, as we like our friends to trust us; let us lean on Him, as we beseech our friends to lean on us; let us try to please Him for love's sake, as love leads us to try to please our earthly friends. Moreover, let us recognize the blessed fact, that if we are His friends, He is necessarily our Friend also, and that the sweet duties and responsibilities of friendship are upon His shoulders, as well as upon ours.

"A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."—Prov. 18:24.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."—Exod. 33:11.

If God is our Friend, and if we are His friends, He will tell us His secrets; "I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." (Compare Gen. 18:17, and Amos 3:7). See also, Psalm 25:14. If we would learn the Lord's secrets, therefore, we must be His friends; and He

Himself has told us how. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

IV. He calls us His *brethren.*

"For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."—Heb. 2:11, 12.

Let us *be* His brethren, then, and take to our hearts the wonderful comfort and joy of having such an "elder Brother" to bear our burdens and share our sorrows. Some of us know the comfort of an earthly brother; let us realize the comfort of the Heavenly brother as well.

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."—Rom. 8:29.

Since He is the first born in the family, we, who are the younger members of it, have surely a right to look to Him for all that belongs to an elder brother's place, and may without hesitation make use of Him as our brother; and lay upon Him a brother's burdens.

V. He calls us His *sheep.*

"For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. To-day if ye will hear His voice."—Ps. 95:7.

"And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God."—Ezek. 34:31.

Let us *be* sheep then, and abandon ourselves to the care of the Shepherd to whom we belong. The sheep can not care for themselves, nor protect themselves, nor provide food for themselves; the

Shepherd must do it all. The responsibility of their well-being is all on his shoulders, not on theirs. They have nothing to do but to trust him, and to follow him. And the Lord is *our* Shepherd.

A great many people refuse to be the sheep, and insist upon trying to be the Shepherd instead. That is, they try to assume all the duties that belong to the Shepherd; and they entirely decline to be cared for and protected as the sheep are. Or else they try to be both the sheep and also the Shepherd, and to perform the part of each at the same time; an impossible and wearisome task. Let us cease then trying to be anything but just simply what we are; sheep in the care of the Divine Shepherd.

VI. He likens us to *birds.*

"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"—Matt. 6:26.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."—Luke 12:6, 7.

We are to "behold the fowls of the air" that we may learn to live a life of freedom and of joy such as theirs, in the glad consciousness of our Heavenly Father's watchful care and protecting love. Let us say then with the poet,

> "It cometh, therefore, to this, Lord,
> That I *have* considered thy word,
> And I will henceforth be thy bird."

VII. He likens us to *chickens.*

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"—Matt. 23:37.

The little chicken hides itself under the fortress of its mother's wings, and feels safe, no matter what enemies may be raging around; and we also may hide "under His wings," and have no fear. Suppose a little chicken should stand off trembling and frightened, when the hawk was in sight, refusing to go under the mother's wing, because it was too small and insignificant and helpless. Would not the mother's call say to it as plainly as words could speak, "It is just because you *are* little and helpless, that I want you under my wing. If you were strong and capable of protecting yourself, you would not need my wing." And does not God say the same in effect to us? Our helplessness and littleness constitute our right to His care. Let us then consent to *be* the little chickens, hidden under the blessed fortress of His Divine wing.

"He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust: His truth shall be thy shield and buckler."—Ps. 91:4.

VIII. He calls us *branches* of the vine.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in

you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."—John 15: 1-5.

Be branches then, and realize that you have no life apart from the vine: and realize also that you have nothing to do in order to bring forth much fruit, but to abide in the vine. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, in the very nature of things. Do not try then, to do it, but abide in the vine, and let the life-giving sap flow through you, without effort on your part, and without anxiety. Only see to it that you do not hinder its flow by doubt or by rebellion. *Be* a branch and a branch only, and do not try to be anything else. Do not try to *make* the fruit, but consent to *bear* it. Let it grow.

IX. He likens us to *trees.*

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."—Jer. 17: 7, 8.

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God."—Ps. 92: 12, 13.

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."—Ps. 1: 3.

X. He likens us to *flowers.*

"And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all

his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"—Matt. 6: 28–30.

"For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant."—Isa. 5: 7.

Let us *be* trees and flowers then, and grow as they grow, in a happy unconsciousness of our growing. Let us consider them "how they grow," and let us give up all our straining, and stretching, and self-efforts after growth, and try to grow like them by the power of an inward growing-life alone.

Let us be like them also in this, that we do not try to cultivate ourselves. Too many try to be their own husbandmen, and to cultivate, and water, and dig about, and prune, and even sometimes to plant themselves. They try to *be* what they are not, and what they never can be, i. e., the husbandman instead of the branches, the gardener instead of the garden, the farmer instead of the trees and flowers. And of course they fail. But let us *be* what we are, the trees, and flowers, and gardens only, and let us leave to our Divine Husbandman all the care and responsibility of our growing and our blooming.

XI. He likens us to *clay*.

"But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou art our potter; and we all are the work of thy hands."—Isa. 64: 8.

"O house of Israel, can not I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."—Jer. 18: 6.

Let us *be* the clay then, and not the potter. Most

people try to be both the clay and the potter. But this is an impossibility, and only mars the work. The clay must be put into the potter's hands, and abandoned to his working. The potter takes the clay thus abandoned to him, and begins to mould and fashion it to his will. The clay can do nothing but yield itself to the potter and submit to his processes: the potter alone can do the fashioning and moulding; and the responsibility for this is all on his shoulders, not on the clay. Let us consent then to *be* what we *are*, and give up forever trying to be what we are not and never can be.

"Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?"—Isa. 45: 9.

XII. He calls us *vessels.*

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."—2 Tim. 2: 21.

"But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."—Acts 9: 15.

The things that are necessary in a vessel are that it should be empty and clean. It is of comparatively little account for purposes of use, as to what is its shape or the material of which it is made. The Master can fill and use any vessel that is emptied of self and is open to receive His Spirit.

XIII. He calls us *instruments.*

"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."—Rom. 6: 13.

"Thou art my battle axe, and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations; and with thee will I destroy kingdoms."—Jer. 51: 20.

God does not tell us that we are the workmen, who are to use and manage the instruments, but that we are the instruments to be used and managed by the Divine Master Workman who made us, and who alone, therefore, understands for what work we are best fitted, and how to use us. The only thing the instrument can do is to "yield" itself perfectly to the will of the Master Workman. Rom. 6: 16. The Master surely knows how best to use His instruments, and it is plainly not the business of the tool to decide these questions for itself. Neither must it try to help by its own efforts to do the work. One absolutely necessary characteristic of a tool is its pliableness. The moment resistance is felt in any tool, the moment it refuses to move just as the master wants, that moment it becomes unfit for use. If I am writing, and my fine gold pen begins to catch and sputter, and to move with difficulty, I will soon lay it aside and take gladly in its place even a stub end of a lead pencil, if only it will move easily in obedience to my will. The strength of an instrument lies in its helplessness. Because it is helpless to do anything of itself, therefore the master can use it as he pleases. There must be no interference on the part of the instrument. So Paul says—

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."—2 Cor. 12:9, 10.

The "power of Christ" can rest fully only upon those instruments who have no power of their own.

XIV. He calls us His *treasure.*

"For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure."—Ps. 135:4.

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine."—Exod. 19:5.

If God can call us His "peculiar treasure," let us take the joy of it to our souls. For, dear and precious to our hearts as are those we peculiarly love, far more dear and precious must we ourselves be to our Father in Heaven, since He calls us His "peculiar treasure." *We* always take especial care of our treasures, and God will surely take especial care of His.

XV. He calls us His *bride.*

"For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.—Isa. 62:5.

"And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord."—Hosea 2:19, 20.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ the head of the church: and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands,

love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."—Eph. 5: 23–32..

But little need be said concerning this. It gives us a sight of the love of espousals between Christ's heart and ours. Love takes different forms in our lives, and regards its object in many different ways. The love here set forth to us in this wondrous naming, is the highest and closest and most tender that human hearts can know, and it pictures to us a glory of affection between Christ's heart and ours, such as no words can adequately express. It is one of the latest revelations that come to a soul. At first we seek His *gifts* only, but at last we seek *Himself.* At first we are occupied with our needs. and come to the Lord simply to have them supplied. But at last we lose sight of the gifts in our longing for the Giver, and can be satisfied with nothing short of Himself. Our souls cry out for a realized union with our Lord. And then there comes to us with untold joy the wonderful words, "As a Bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will thy God rejoice

over thee," and we believe them, and enter into our rest in the bosom of our Beloved!

XV. Finally He declares that we are *one with Himself.*

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."—John 17:21–23.

"That they may be one!" it is all shut up in this! One with the Father *as* the Son is one! Similarity of thought, of feeling, of desire, of love, of hate! We may have it all, if we will. We may walk through this life so united to Christ, that our cares and our interests, our sorrows and our joys, our purposes and our wishes will be the same. One will alone to govern, and that His will. One mind alone to lead us, and that His mind. He in us, and we in Him, will then be our living; until at last, so intermingled and conjoined will our lives become, that we shall be able to say in very truth, always and everywhere, "Not I, but Christ." For self will vanish in such a union as this, and that great "I" of ours which so fills up our present horizon, will wilt down into nothing before the glory of His overcoming presence! *Be* one, then, since He says we are, and let the power of that oneness be lived out in every moment of our existence.

Dear reader, which one of these figures expresses *thy* relationship with thy Lord? Which name hast thou had an ear to hear whispered in the secret of thy soul?

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."—Rev. 2:17.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."—Rev. 3:12.

Will we consent to let God write upon us His "new name"? And what shall it be? He awaits our answer. For He may call us what He will, but until we consent to *be* what He calls us, the new name is not *written* upon us.

Choose thy relationship then, either one, or all, and henceforward *be* what thou hast discovered thou really *art* in the mind and will of God.

BIBLE READINGS.

XIII.

SUBJECT—FRUIT-BEARING.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you.*"—John 15: 16.

God's purpose in our salvation is that we should bring forth fruit. A husbandman plants the vine for the sake of the grapes it will bear; the farmer plants his apple orchard in order to gather fruit. A fruitless christian life is an impossibility.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."—John 15: 1, 2.

"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."—Luke 3: 9.

Many are apt to think far more of being *saved*, than of being *fruitful*. But God does not separate these things; to be saved *is* to be fruitful, and to be fruitful is to be saved.

"He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit

on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."—Luke 13:6–9.

"For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."—Heb. 6:7, 8.

No matter how good an outward appearance our lives may make, no matter how clear our doctrines, nor how great our activities, unless we "bear fruit" we can not be acceptable to God. And the fruit He desires is character. It is to *be* right even more than to *do* right. Of course the doing will follow the being, but the vital point is the being. Most people have too much reversed this order, and have made the *doing* the vital thing; limiting the meaning of fruit-bearing to service, so much work done, so many meetings held, so many sermons preached or prayers prayed, such and such results accomplished. But God's primary idea of fruit is Christ-likeness.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."—Gal. 5:22, 23.

"For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."—Eph. 5:9.

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."—Rom. 8:29.

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ: being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."—Phil. 1:9-11.

People may do much wonderful so-called Christian work, and yet in it all bear not one single "fruit of righteousness" that will be "unto the glory and praise of God."

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."—Jas. 3:17, 18.

"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree can not bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."—Matt. 7:16-20.

Some Christians have what is sometimes called a "public gift," and can speak or pray in a meeting to great edification; but they go home to be cross to their families, and bitter towards their acquaintances, and fault-finding, and malicious, and full of self. They have great outward results apparently, but they have not as yet the very first and most vital of all the "fruits of the Spirit," which is love; and consequently all the rest, grand as it may seem, "profiteth them nothing."

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." 1 Cor. 13:1-3.

"Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself; according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased

his altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images."—Hosea 10:1.

To "bring forth fruit to himself" means simply that self is the center and end of all the work. To bring glory to self, to gain advantage for self, to secure future rewards for self, to exalt self in some way, this is the secret end and aim of such service, and God calls it an "empty vine."

"Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."—Matt. 12:33-35.

In the very nature of things it is impossible for an "evil man" to bring forth good things; for, even though we do not know it and surely do not intend it, yet it is nevertheless an inexorable fact that "out of the abundance of the heart" the life will be lived. We can not "put on" in spiritual things. If our tree is corrupt, our fruit will be corrupt also, no matter how much we may try to train it up or make it appear well.

"For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit: neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."—Luke 6:43-46.

If the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, and gentleness, and meekness, and long-suffering, are

not seen in a man's life, then the Spirit cannot be there either, for where the Spirit is, His fruits must necessarily be manifest.

"But when He saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to His baptism, He said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."—Matt. 3: 7–10.

Even to have "Abraham to our father" will not save us, neither will any other outward relation or position. Nothing but the fruits of the Spirit can come from the Spirit; and without these fruits, no one can claim to be walking in the Spirit, let their outward activities or eminence in the church be what they may.

"For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."—Prov. 1:29–31.

The "fruit of our own way" may look like goodly fruit to the eye of flesh, but the soul that is compelled to "eat" of it, will find itself starved as to its true inner life.

"I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."—Isa. 3: 10.

Man may judge by outward appearances, but the Lord "searches the heart," and gives to each one of us according to the fruit He finds *there*.

We who are Christian workers need especially to realize this. We need to understand that no amount of preaching or praying, or singing, or weeping, or groaning will do, instead of being gentle, and meek, and long suffering, and good. A great many people want to work for the Lord, but do not want to be good for Him; but it is the goodness He cares for, far more than the work. If you can not do both, choose the being good, for it is infinitely more important.

"Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard, What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant: and He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry."—Isa. 5: 1–7.

We must see to it that the fruit we bring forth in our lives does not partake of the nature of "wild grapes," which set the teeth of all with whom we live in our every day lives, on edge. There *are* alas! too many such Christians to be found, even sometimes among those who are

"pillars in the Church." Could their families speak, they could tell of "oppression" and a "cry" that would wring the heart for its pitiful sadness.

"For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter."—Deut. 32:32.

"Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?"—Jer. 2:21.

How then does this "good fruit" come? There is only one way in which it *can* come. It grows from the seed God plants.

"And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it."—Mark 4:26-32.

"And He taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in His doctrines, Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundred."—Mark 4:2-8.

Fruit does not come by effort, but by growth. It unfolds from within. There must be first a

good inward life, before there can be good outward fruit. What would we think of a farmer who should make an orchard by beginning at the apples; and should collect bushel after bushel of excellent fruit, should tie these on branches, and fasten the branches to tree trunks, and then fasten the trunks to the roots, and finally plant the trees thus made, in the ground? And yet this would not be more foolish than it is to try to begin the Christian life at the works end instead of the character end.

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"—Matt. 6: 27–30.

"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."—Matt. 7: 18.

Notice the word "cannot" in this passage. It does not say will not, but cannot. It expresses an impossibility, in the very nature of things. No outward "putting on" therefore will avail anything in the matter of fruit bearing. The tree itself must be good, or the fruit it bears "cannot" be good, try as hard as we may.

Some people always walk on spiritual stilts when before others. If they are riding in a railway car, they take out their Bibles in order to look pious; when they write a letter, they try to put in some expressions that will show their religion; they

interlard their conversation with pious ejaculations. They can never afford to be natural in the presence of others, for fear they should not be considered as religious as they really are. They do their works to be "seen of men," and verily they do indeed have their reward. Man sees and praises; but God sees and condemns.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."—Matt. 6: 1–5.

"A man can never be more than his character makes him. A man can never do more nor better than deliver or embody that which is his character. Nothing valuable can come out of a man that is not first in the man. Character must stand behind and back up every thing, the sermon, the poem, the picture, the book. None of them is worth a straw without it."

"Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and

strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."—Jas. 3:10–18.

"And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."—Matt. 15:16–20.

Character then is the essential thing. What is in the heart, and what "comes out of the heart" are the only realities in life. And if we fail to see this, we are yet, as our Lord said, "without understanding." In the very nature of things a fig tree cannot bear both figs and thistles, and neither likewise can blessing and cursing be the fruit of the same spirit.

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye can not serve God and mammon."—Matt. 6:24.

"For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."—Rom. 6: 20–22.

What then is the secret of true fruit-bearing?

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth

much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."—John 15: 4–8.

Here again we have the inexorable nature of things, "The branch *cannot* bear fruit of itself." Try as hard as we may, no fruit is possible except we "abide in Christ." Other things *are* possible; wonderful works perhaps, eminent service, great benevolences, but not the "fruit of the Spirit." This fruit cannot come from any other source than from the indwelling Spirit.

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."—Rom. 7: 4, 5.

"I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard Him, and observed Him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found."—Hosea 14: 5–8.

"He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit."—Isa. 27: 6.

"From ME is thy fruit found," not from anything of the flesh, not from our own activities, not from anything of self in any way, but from God alone. And He alone can perfect His own fruit.

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh

away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."—John 15: 2.

It is the husbandman's business to prune and purge the vine in order to make it fruitful. And we must accept all the storms and sorrows of life as the purgings necessary to make us bring forth "more fruit." To an inexperienced eye the trimming and cutting of the gardener often seem ruthless, and we cry out to him to spare the vine. But in the autumn, when the rich clusters of fruit are hanging from the same vine, we acknowledge his wisdom and applaud his skill. And in our soul life we may similarly be tempted sometimes to question the wisdom or the goodness of the Divine Husbandman, when He sees it necessary to cut off our most flourishing branches, or to trim our life of its dearest joys. But the Husbandman knows what is best for His vine and we must leave it all to Him.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—2 Cor. 4:17.

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth

to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."—Heb. 12: 5–11.

What then must we do if we would bring forth "much fruit?"

I. We must abandon ourselves to the Lord and trust Him perfectly.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."—Jer. 17:7, 8.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."—Psalm 1: 1–4.

II. We must receive the truth and believe it; and must keep on steadfastly believing it, against all seemings.

"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."—Luke 8: 11–15.

"Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He sware unto thy fathers: and He will love thee, and bless

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thee, and multiply thee: He will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which He sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle."—Deut. 7: 12–14.

"But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; and if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant. * * * * * * * your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits."—Lev. 26; 14: 15, 20.

III. We must submit ourselves to God's will, and must obey His voice.

"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely."—Lev. 26: 3–5.

"And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. * * * * * * And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee."—Deut. 28: 2–5, 11.

IV. We must die as to the self-life, and must be alive only to the indwelling life of Christ.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."—John 12: 24, 25.

"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."—1 Pet. 2: 24.

"For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."—Rom. 7:5, 6.

In order to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, we must live in the Spirit, and must die to all that is of the flesh. If we would bear fruit to God, we must cease to bear fruit to self.

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."—Gal. 5: 24, 25.

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."—Eph. 4: 22–24.

While however the primary sense of fruit-bearing is character, there is also a fruitfulness in service that follows as the outcome of this inward life.

Fruit always covers a seed, and a new growth will therefore invariably follow in the wake of all fruit-bearing. The fruit is simply the wrapping which is around the seed; and if your fruit-bearing is real, and not fictitious, there will be sown by your living, seeds of life in the world around you that will spring up in wondrous fruitfulness in the hearts of others.

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."—Col. 1: 9, 10.

"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."—Heb. 13:15.

"And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them."—Ezek. 34:26, 27.

"For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruits, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong."—Zech. 8:12, 13.

Does *your* fruit cover a seed of good? Are you "made a blessing?" Is there so much sweetness, and gentleness, and meekness, and love, in *your* daily living as to be a seed of blessing in the hearts of your family, and friends, and neighbors? Or does your life sow seeds of hatred, and anger, and all unlovely and un-Christlike things?

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."—Gal. 6:7–9.

There is no more solemn fact in all the universe than this, that what a man sows that shall he also reap. And the only escape from it is to be found in the rooting out of the seed which has been sown to the flesh, and the planting of a new crop. We must begin to bring forth fruit unto

God and from God only, that is those divine fruits of the Spirit whose seed will spring up in blessing for all around us.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—Matt. 5:16.

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."—1 Cor. 6:20.

"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart."—2 Cor. 3:3.

It may well be that our Divine Husbandman is seeking fruit at this very moment from many of the trees of His planting, and is finding none, in spite of a great outward show of greenness and vigor.

"And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, He was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find any thing thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet."—Mark 11:12, 13.

"These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear; clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots."—Jude :12.

"They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out His vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."—Matt. 21:41-43.

From many an active Christian has the "kingdom been taken," to their great surprise; but the secret of it, if looked for, would be found in this

simple fact, that that Christian has not been "bringing forth the fruits thereof."

But let *us* be among the number of those whose fruit shall be so truly "the fruit of the Spirit" as to be always to the praise of God's glory.

"A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranites, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon."—Cant. 4: 12-15.

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."—Psalm 92: 12-14.

And let us be content with whatever purging or pruning our Divine Husbandman may see to be necessary for our perfecting, anxious only to "lay up pleasant fruits" for our beloved, that He may see of the travail of His soul in us and be satisfied.

"Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits."—Cant. 4: 16.

"I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved."—Cant. 5: 1.

"The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved."—Cant. 7: 13.

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XIV.

SUBJECT—FIVE TALENTS OR ONE?—A LESSON ON SERVICE.—Matt. 25:14–46.

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods."—Verse 14.

This is a parable concerning service, and is full of most important teaching. "His own servants;" this must mean disciples, followers, in other words, Christians. Evidently *all* the servants were called. None were left out, none were expected to pass the time of the Master's absence in idleness. And therefore if you are in the household, the call is to you. No member of the household is excepted. None can excuse themselves because they have not been called, for the call is to every one.

"For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch."—Mark 13:34.

"To every man his work." Not the same work to all, but each one has his own talent and his own place. And each one is responsible only for that which is given to *him himself* to do. This seems too plain to be spoken of; but as a fact, most members of God's household are more concerned

about the work given to some one else, than about that given to themselves.

"Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."—John 21: 21, 22.

Not what others do or leave undone, but what I myself do or leave undone, is the vital thing in my soul life.

Neither should I care for the judgment of others concerning my work. A servant in a household is not anxious to know what the master or mistress next door may think of him or his work, but only what his own master and mistress think.

"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."—1 Cor. 4:3–5.

Only One who can see the end from the beginning is able to judge a righteous judgment; therefore the servants of Christ must reserve their judgment of one another, until the final judgment is declared by their common Master. And we are therefore in truth forbidden to judge at all.

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."—Rom. 14:4.

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the

law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge."—Jas. 4:11.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considereth not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."—Matt. 7:1-5.

We are each one to do our own work faithfully, without regard to how our fellow workers may do theirs. If these plain and positive rules were followed in the church of Christ, what a millenium of peace we should have!

"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."—Rom. 14:10-13.

Our only judging must be lest we ourselves put a stumbling-block in our brother's way. What wonderful Christian harmony such judging as this would cause!

"He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come."—Luke 19:12, 13.

Of course, the object of the Master in giving talents to His servants, is that they shall "occupy" them until His return. To occupy, means to use, not to lay away in a napkin. But we must notice that the talents were not all alike.

"And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey."—Verse 15.

"To every man according to his several ability." All are not capable of the same work, and the Master's gifts are apportioned to us, according to our individual capacity.

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophesy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."—1 Cor. 12: 4–11.

The gifts are different, but the responsibility of using them is the same in every case. And yet notice the conduct of these servants.

"Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one, went and digged in the earth and hid his lord's money."—Verses 16–18.

Two of the servants used their talents faithfully; but one of them thought his talent was so small that it would not amount to anything much, even if he did use it, and the risk of failure seemed to him too great. Therefore he hid it in a safe place, to be returned intact to the Master when He should call for an account.

"After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and

reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents; behold I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine."—Verses 13-25.

There are many such Christians in the household of faith. They are conscious of possessing only one talent, and that, perhaps, a very insignificant one; and they can not see that any good whatever can possibly come from the using of it. Then, besides, they have hard thoughts of their Divine Master, and believe that His judgment of them and of their work will be as critical and severe, as they fear human judgments will be, or as their own have often been of others, and consequently they are afraid to work at all.

"Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."—Ps. 50:20, 21.

Many sit and judge their brother harshly, and then they think God is like themselves, and will judge them as harshly; and they are afraid of Him, as though He were a "hard man."

"And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man; thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow." —Luke 19:20, 21.

We are far too apt to think that God is "altogether such a one as ourselves" in the worst elements of our characters, and to doubt whether He is as good as ourselves in the best.

We think His judgments are as harsh and exacting as ours often are; but we never dream His love is as charitable, and considerate, and tender as ours sometimes is. If we would judge Him by our best instead of by our worst, we would form a far different idea of Him, and be far less afraid of Him, than is now, alas, too often the case.

Contrast the final judgment given in the case of these servants.

To the one with five talents was said:

"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."—Verse 21.

To the one with two talents was said:

"His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."—Verse 23.

To the one with one talent was said:

"His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him

which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."—Verses 26–29.

In the two first cases it is "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," and in the last, "Thou wicked and slothful servant." The difference was not in the *amount* done or left undone, but in the faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the talents given. The servant with the two talents was commended in just the same words as the one with five. And the servant with only one talent, would have received a similar approval, had he shown a similar faithfulness.

For *such* a commendation who would not strive? To hear the Master say "Well done" at last, would surely repay one for all that might have been passed through to deserve it!

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."—1 Cor. 4: 1, 2.

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."—Luke 16: 10.

A steward is not responsible for the *amount* of things intrusted to his care, he is only responsible for the care of that which is intrusted; and the praise or blame that awaits him depends altogether and only upon the way he has fulfilled his trust, whether that trust has been one talent or many.

Alas! how many talents are "laid up in napkins" in the church of Christ, whose owners never

dream of the sad condemnation that awaits them! Their sole duty was to "occupy" the talent given, but because it was small and apparently of little account, they have failed. We are not praised or blamed for the number of our talents, but simply and only for the faithful or unfaithful use of those given. We can not escape this fact. One day we must face our record in reference to it; and far better will it be for us to do this now, than to wait until it is too late to alter it.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."—2 Cor. 5:10.

"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."—Eccl. 12:14.

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."—Rom. 14:12.

We can not avoid giving in this "account," for it is one that gives itself. Our life work tells in the formation of character, and it is the character we have formed that is to be the judgment given. In the very nature of things we receive for that which we have done, and we can not help it.

"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—Verse 30.

This is a very solemn word. For we see that it is the "unprofitable servant" merely, who was cast into this outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth: not one who had committed some great crime, but one who had simply been "unprofitable." And it was a "servant" too;

not an outsider, but one of the "household," evidently a believer in his Lord and Master. Have we ever dreamed that to be merely an "unprofitable servant" was so serious and grievous a thing as this?

We Christians have been used to appropriating this Scripture to sinners, feeling that, as for ourselves, we had nothing to do with it, and need not give it a second thought. But we can not escape this fact, that it was a condemnation pronounced on the unprofitable servant, who had done nothing but hide his talent in the earth because he was afraid to use it. I would that every child of God would solemnly consider this.

But some may think that they at least do not possess even the one talent. The remainder of our chapter will answer such.

Our Lord at once followed the parable we have been considering, with another, which was evidently intended to elucidate the first, and to show what *is* the work He has given us to do, and what *are* the talents, whether one or many, which He has bestowed upon us.

"When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a

stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me. I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me. * * * * Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was a hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." —Verses 31–36, 41–43.

The work to which we are called is the Christ-like work of helping and saving, and the talents given us for use are those common to humanity, i. e., the power of ministering to the sick, and helpless, and needy, and sinful. The difference between the sheep and the goats was just this, that the one "occupied" these homely talents and did this Christ-like work, and the other did not.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."—James 1:27.

"What doth it profit my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."—James 2: 14–18.

It is always easy to *say* things, but the *doing* is the vital point. It is possible to be very "pious" in all religious performances, to fast and pray and "afflict one's soul," and to "say" all manner of good things; and yet to have after all very little "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father;" and to be, without knowing it, classed

in the mind of the Master among the goats on His left hand at the last.

"Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"—Isa. 58: 3–7.

All the talking, or fasting, or weeping, or wearing of sackcloth in the world, will not do as a substitute for the Christ-like life of love and kindness towards our fellow-men. The "fast He has chosen" is to help the needy and raise the fallen, and nothing will do instead of this.

A great many Christians never do anything except "for themselves." Whether they fast, or whether they eat and drink, it is all for themselves, to save their own souls, or to help forward their own experience; but they never lift a hand to help any one else. Their religion is all for self-exaltation, in one way or another, either now or hereafter, and not truly for the glory of God at all. And they are so absorbed in self, that they do not even know that they are condemned.

"Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."—Verses 44, 45.

"When saw we," they ask; never dreaming that because they have not served their fellow men, they have therefore failed to serve their Master.

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."—Verse 46.

Notice the grievous condemnation here bestowed upon those who had simply failed to do this Christlike work. The punishment inflicted is not because of actual sins committed, but simply and only because of some kind deeds left undone. And I fear lest some church members, who have been very lavish in meting out this condemnation to the outside sinner, may find that it belongs quite as much to themselves, viewed in the searching light of God's eternal day.

"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree can not bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."—Matt. 7:16–23.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave

In Exodus xxxv we have a beautiful picture of the sort of service our divine Master loves. Each one brought *what he had.* And they brought it so willingly, that soon there was more than enough.

"And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered, offered an offering of gold unto the Lord. And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and red skins of rams: and badgers' skins, brought them. Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the Lord's offering, and every man, with whom was found shittim wood for any work of the service, brought it. And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair. And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate; and spice, and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense. The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses."—Exod. 35:22–29.

"And they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning. And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made; and they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much."—Exod. 36:3–7.

If this sort of service were offered by the church of Christ to her divine Master now, it would

for slaves. We would say of him, "He is one of us;" although he might never have heard of the anti-slavery party to which we belong. Surely we could never forbid such a one either by word or deed from casting out the devils of sin and oppression, nor refuse to join in his work.

Not even so small a talent as a cup of water is too small to be used for the Master; and to this, equally as to the great hospital built or the great reform wrought by those of larger gifts, will the blessed approval come, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And perhaps even more to the first than to the last.

"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."—Mark 12:41–44.

It is not much to give out of one's abundance; but to give "out of one's want," all that one has, whether in time, or in talent, or in sympathy, this is the thing that receives the Lord's approval. If then you have only one talent, and the service you render is "out of your want" instead of out of your abundance, even though it be all that you have, cast it into the Lord's treasury, and be sure you shall win His approval, whether the world approves or not.

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not be so hard as it is to find willing workers to send forth into the great harvest field; and the ranks of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and of all other societies which are working for the uplifting of fallen humanity, would fill up with amazing rapidity.

"But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."—2 Cor. 9:6, 7.

"Willing" service is the only kind that is really acceptable to the Lord. We are apt to think that the service which is a "cross" to us must be more meritorious. But is it more meritorious for a mother and father to care for their children if they find it a "great cross" to do so? Do we value the services of our friends more, if they are grudging services, than if they are poured out willingly from loving hearts? And can we imagine our divine Master will feel about service to Himself differently from us?

"And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint."—2 Sam. 15:15.

"*Whatsoever*," let it be one talent or five; *my* work, not the work of any other, a cup of water, a mite, a few kind words, a murmured prayer, "whatsoever" thy hands find to do, do it with thy might. And thy reward shall be sure. For whether thy talents be five or one, if they are only

faithfully used for the Master, there shall certainly one day sound in thy ears the blessed words, "Inasmuch," and "Well done."

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."—Luke 12:35–40.

Let us close our lesson then with the solemn question asked by David of the children of Israel, hundreds of years ago; and let us make our answer as full and prompt as theirs.

"And who then is willing to consecrate his *service* this day unto the Lord."—1 Chron. 29:5.

"Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly, and gave for the service of the house of God, of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord; by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite.

"Then the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy."—1 Chron. 29:6–9

BIBLE READINGS.

XV.

SUBJECT—GOD'S OWNERSHIP.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—*What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*"—1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

"What! know ye not?" Alas! how few of us really *know* that we are not our own, and that we do actually and truly belong to God! We have heard it and read of it often enough, and have perhaps thought we believed it; but as to really *knowing* it, this is a different matter. And yet it is essential to our peace and well being that we should know it. Any doubt as to our real place and position toward God is a grievous hindrance to our spiritual prosperity and development.

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."—Isa. 1:2, 3.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children"—Hosea 4:6.

It is therefore of vital importance that we

should know how matters stand between ourselves and the Lord. There is a great deal of hope and a great deal of desire, but knowledge after all is the only stable thing. Our first step therefore in this matter of God's ownership must be to find out the facts of the case, as to whom we really do belong, whether to ourselves or to God.

Let us see what is the testimony of Scripture on this.

"Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine."—Ezek. 18:4.

"For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance."—Deut. 32:9.

"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."—Rom. 14:8.

We belong to God by creation; and we belong to Him also in a still deeper sense by redemption.

"But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."—Isa. 64:8.

"Know ye, that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture."—Ps. 100:3.

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."—Ps. 95:6, 7.

Anything a man makes is surely his own, without a possibility of question. Therefore the blessed fact that God is our Maker, involves in the very nature of things, the still more blessed fact that He is therefore our Owner also.

"But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have

redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine."—Isa. 43:1.

In a still deeper sense is God our Owner, because He has redeemed us. All the world over, the rights of a man's possession, in anything he has bought and paid for, are recognized without a question; and if we apply this rule to the fact that *we* have been purchased by the "precious blood of Christ," we shall get a little idea of how utterly and incontrovertibly we belong to Him.

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."—1 Pet. 1:18, 19.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."—Acts 20:28.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it."—Eph. 5:25.

He "gave Himself for us." Could He have paid a greater price than this?

"Love divine! of such great loving,
Only mothers know the cost;
Cost of love, that, all love passing,
Gave itself to save the lost."

"As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep."—John 10:15.

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."—Rom. 5:6–8.

But just here we must avoid the mistake of thinking that redemption was a price paid *to* God, as to an angry creditor. It was a price paid *for*

sin, the price that love always must pay for the sin of those whom it loves. "We are "bought with a price," and, because of this, we belong body, soul, and spirit to the One who has bought us.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."—Matt. 13;44–46.

Christ sold "all that He had" to purchase the "field," which is the world, for the sake of the "treasure" that is hidden there, which is humanity. (This is not the usual interpretation of the passage, but by comparing Christ's own words, "the field is the world," in Matt. 13:38, I think we will find it admissible.)

And again, the "pearl of great price" may also be considered to be the human race whom Christ purchased with His own blood, "all that He had."

Surely, after all this, we can not question the fact of His ownership!

Since, then, it is a settled fact that we are not our own, but that we belong to God, let us consider what follows from this.

I. His ownership of us lays upon Him the responsibility of caring for us.

II. It lays upon us the responsibility of surrender, and trust, and obedience to Him.

I. We will consider first the responsibilities of ownership.

"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."—1 Tim. 5: 8.

The whole world acknowledges the justice of this. To own anything, means that the owner is bound to care for and protect and bless, to the limit of ability, that which is owned. We are all accustomed to looking so exclusively on the human side of the question of our salvation, on *our* duties and *our* responsibilities, that we lose sight almost altogether of God's side, and thus miss of that, which after all, is the vital point of the whole matter. The responsibilities of an owner, and much more of a Creator, are greater than can be expressed. Parents feel this, and by a universal instinct, which is inalienable in our natures, all parents are held responsible to their own consciences and to their fellow-men for the welfare of their children. In the same way, owners of animals, or owners of property, or owners of anything whatever, are considered to be bound to care for that which they own, and are held responsible for its welfare. Even children feel this responsibility, and will fulfil the duties of ownership, no matter how irksome, feeding the bird or the rabbit without complaint, because it is their own.

In a wonderful little book called "Frankenstein" we have an allegory that vividly illustrates

this truth. The writer imagines a student who has penetrated into the secrets of life, and who proposes to make a man. He spends some two years in framing a huge being, creating bones and muscle and tendons and nerves, and arranging them in their relative order. At the proper moment he communicates the vital spark, and the creature opens its eyes, stares around it, and begins to move. The workman is suddenly awakened to a sense of the awful responsibility he has incurred in the act of creation, and flies in terror from the work of his hands. But he can not escape his responsibilities. The creature wanders over the earth, making misery for itself and others wherever it goes, and its creator is forced to follow it in order to atone for its mistakes and its sins, and to free it from its continually recurring difficulties. At last they have an interview, and the creature reproaches the man for having made it, and tells him that he is responsible for all that it has done and suffered.

Our Lord Himself asserts this truth when He compares Himself and His own faithful care of His sheep, to the neglect and unfaithfulness of a hireling "whose own the sheep are not."

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good

shepherd, and know my sheep and am known of mine."—John 10: 11–14.

In Ezekiel we have a vivid description of the stern disapproval with which the Lord regards those shepherds who care for themselves rather than for the flocks under their control.

"And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them."—Ezek. 34: 1–10.

"Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord."—Jer. 23: 1, 2.

"Woe to the idle shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened."—Zech. 11: 17.

From these condemnations of the idle shepherds "whose own the sheep were not," we may learn what the duties of the owner of the sheep must be. These foolish shepherds fed themselves but not the flock; the owner would feed the flock, even though he must go without himself. These false shepherds neglected the diseased, and failed to strengthen the weak, they did not seek for those who were lost, and they ruled the flock with "force and with cruelty;" the owner heals the sick, and strengthens the weak, and seeks the lost, and rules the flock with gentleness and love.

"For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. * * * * I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick."—Ezek. 34:11, 12, 15, 16.

And such is Christ, the "good Shepherd," to whom the sheep belong.

"And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that

were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."—Luke 4:16–21.

In all ages of the church this responsibility of ownership has been recognized. Moses referred to it as being a burden greater than he could bear, and reminded the Lord that because the Israelites were *His* people, therefore the care of them must rest upon *His* shoulders and not upon Moses' own shoulders. Had they belonged to Moses, it would have been his duty to care for them; but since they belonged to God it was plainly God's duty.

"And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me."—Num. 11:11–14.

"I prayed therefore unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin: lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the Lord was not able to bring them unto the land which He promised them, and because He hated them, He hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness. Yet they are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm."—Deut. 9:27–29.

"And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them: for they be thy people, and thine inheritance, which

thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron."—1 Kings 8:50.

"For they be thy people;" this was a plea that admitted of no denial. Nehemiah and Isaiah realized this, and made similar pleas.

"Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer."—Neh. 1: 10, 11.

"But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our Potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people."—Isa. 64: 8, 9.

"Behold, we are all thy people!" Where could we find a stronger plea?

A lady whom I met when traveling through the South, told me a story of the slave times there, which seems to me to illustrate in a wonderful manner this subject of God's ownership. She said she had occasion at one time to give one of her slaves a piece of work to do, which required him to stand outside the window on a plank, that was held steady by some one inside sitting upon the other end. The man was a little afraid, but said, "Well, missus, I'll go, if you'll sit right dar all the time, you' own self." The man's wife was present, and the mistress said, "Won't it do if Mandy sits there? She won't let you fall." "No, missus," he replied, "I doan't trust Mandy; she's only my wife, and she'll just done forgit, and git

up. But you'se my missus and I 'longs to you, and in course you'se gwine to keep me safe."

The responsibility of ownership is therefore an inexorable divine law, which is only another name for the eternal nature of things. And if we can realize this, it will make the fact of our being owned by God one of the most comforting and peace-giving facts in existence.

"But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not; for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west: I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."—Isa. 43: 1–7.

All this therefore, and infinitely more, will the Lord do for us because He has made us and we belong to Him. Can we feel aught but joy then to know that we are His? I remember when first the bliss of this divine ownership dawned upon my soul. I was in the woods away from man's world, almost alone in God's world of nature. I was reading the verse, "Ye are not your own, you are bought with a price," when suddenly the veil parted and I saw what it meant. No words

could tell what that sight was! But I had to hold my Bible open and keep my finger on the printed verse to make myself sure that such bliss as had dawned upon me could really be true. And from that moment, to belong to God has seemed to me the blessing of all blessings in my life!

To the soul that has had a revelation such as this, it can never be anything but joy to sing the good old hymn:

> "Lord, I am thine, entirely thine,
> Purchased and saved by love divine;
> With full consent thine will I be,
> And own thy sovereign right in me."

Sometimes the fact of God's "sovereign right" in us is looked upon as a hard thing, and the soul shrinks and hesitates from consenting to it. But that can only be because such a one does not know what it means.

Let us consider more fully what it is that He does for His own.

I. He loves His own.

"Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."—John 13:1.

II. He lays down His life for His own.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."—John 10:11.

"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."—Eph. 5:2.

III. He seeks His own when they are lost.

"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

How think ye? if a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray."—Matt. 18:11-13.

IV. He heals His own when they are sick.

"When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."—Matt. 8:16, 17.

V. He strengthens His own when they are weak.

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."—2 Cor. 12:9.

VI. He delivers His own from their enemies.

"For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper."—Ps. 72:12.

VII. He keeps His own from danger.

"I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."—Isa. 27:3.

VIII. He leads and teaches His own.

"Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go."—Isa 48:17.

IX. He supplies all their needs.

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."—Phil. 4:19.

X. He carries all their cares.

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."—1 Pet. 5:7.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."—Ps. 55:22.

XI. He purifies His own.

"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."—Titus 2:14.

XII. He gives His own all things.

"Therefore let no man glory in men: for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

XIII. He makes His own one with Himself, and gives them a share in His glory.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."—John 17:20–24.

In the face of such revelations as these, who would not be eager to surrender themselves to such a blessed ownership and control? The control of love is always lovely, even when that love is earthly; because in the very nature of things love *can* choose only the best it knows for its beloved ones, and *must* pour itself out to the last drop to help and to bless them. How much more then must be the blessedness of the control of God, who is love; who is not merely loving, but is Love itself, and in whose ownership there must

be and can be nothing but infinite and fathomless bliss!

Our views are so limited and our thoughts are so bounded by self, that we are apt to think far more of the fact that the Lord belongs to us, than that we belong to Him. But when we come to consider it, we can see in a moment how much more vital and full of blessing is God's ownership of us, than ever ours of Him could by any possibility be. If *we* own Him, then the responsibility of keeping Him is upon our shoulders. While if *He* owns us, this responsibility is on His shoulders. Moreover our keeping is such a poor thing, that if it depended on us we should be sure to lose Him, while we can never have any fear of His losing us.

The soul does not always find this out at once. It is a knowledge that comes with spiritual growth. In Canticles there are three passages that develop this growing knowledge.

1. The soul thinks first of its own ownership of its Beloved, and ranks His ownership of herself in the second place.

"My beloved is mine, and I am His; He feedeth among the lilies."—Cant. 2:16.

2. The soul learns next that the Lord's ownership is the most important, and must take the first place.

"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; He feedeth among the lilies."—Cant. 6:3.

3. The soul learns at last that the only important thing is His ownership, and forgets to mention her own at all.

"I am my beloved's, and His desire is toward me."—Cant. 7:10.

The question next arises as to what are the responsibilities that rest upon us in view of the fact of God's ownership. They are very simple. We are only responsible to do three things, i. e., to yield, to trust, to obey. We *are* the Lord's; now we must recognize this, and must acknowledge Him as our Owner and Master, and must abandon ourselves to His care and control.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—Rom. 12:1.

It is indeed only a "reasonable service," for those who are in the Lord's blessed ownership, to consent to it, and consciously and intelligently give themselves up to His control. A man's "own possessions" are either a praise to him or a disgrace; and we cannot be a praise to our Lord and Master unless we submit ourselves to Him, and let Him have His own way with us.

"This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise."—Isa. 43:21.

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."—1 Cor. 6:20.

"That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ."—Eph. 1:12.

"For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the

whole house of Judah, saith the Lord; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory; but they would not hear."—Jer. 13:11.

May it never be said of any of us that we "would not hear!"

"And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."—Dan. 5:22, 23.

Since we are not our own, we must not "live to ourselves," and we can therefore have no liberty to use ourselves for our own purposes.

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."—1 Pet. 4:1, 2.

"And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."—2 Cor. 5:15.

Further, since we belong to the Lord, we must let the world see how well He cares for us, by receiving in childlike faith all the good things He would bestow upon us.

"Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth. And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor, before all the nations of the earth,

which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it."—Jer. 33:6-9.

Contrast with this the dishonor that Moses felt would come upon the Lord, should the Israelites fail in receiving the promised deliverance.

"And Moses said unto the Lord, Then the Egyptians shall hear it (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which He sware unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness."—Num. 14:13-16.

Let us then show, by the thoroughness of our trust in Him, the utter trustworthiness of the Lord "whose we are and whom we serve;" and let us allow Him to save us to the very uttermost, lest the world should say, as alas! they already do, that it is "because the Lord is not able."

What is needed therefore is that we should first come into a clear knowledge of God's ownership, and then that we should "live up" to this knowledge. There are certain definite exercises of soul that will help the heart into this knowledge. These are set forth in type in Deut. xxvi.

"And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give us. * * * * And He hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. * * * * Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and

to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and to hearken unto His voice: and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all His commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be a holy people unto the Lord thy God, as He hath spoken."—Deut. 26:3, 9, 17, 18, 19

First, we must confess the fact of His ownership. "I profess this day unto the Lord thy God that I *am* come unto the country" (verse 3), and, "He *hath* brought us into this place, and *hath* given us this land" (verse 9). Then we must "avouch the Lord" to be our God, and must surrender ourselves to His control (verse 17). And then finally we shall know the Lord to "avouch" us to be His peculiar people, as He hath promised us (verse 18). And the question of our foundation text, "What! know ye not that ye are not your own?" will be answered with a glad and hearty "Yes I do know it! I am not my own, but God's. I belong to Him alone, and He is my sole and sovereign Owner."

Since I belong to thee, my Savior, God,
All must be well, however rough my road;
However dark my way or prospects be,
All, all is right, since overruled by thee.

Feeblest of all thy flock, thou knowest me, Lord;
Helpless and weak, I stay upon thy word;
In all my weakness, this is still my plea,
That thou art mine, and I belong to thee.

Then come whatever may, I am secure,
Thy love unchanged shall to the end endure;
Frail though I am, thine everlasting arm
Shall shield thy child from every breath of harm.

BIBLE READINGS.

XVI.

SUBJECT—THE RESURRECTION LIFE OF THE BELIEVER.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—"*Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*"—Rom. 6: 4.

Notice the "like as" and the "even so" of this passage. They surely teach that the life we are called to live now and here, is something of the same nature as the life Christ was to live when He was raised from the dead. It is a life belonging to the same order of things, an *interior* resurrection life, to be lived here in these earthly bodies.

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."—2 Cor. 4: 10, 11.

"Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses."—Col. 2: 12, 13.

It is just as though one had died and been buried, and had risen again, and thenceforth

walked in a new and risen life. Such a one would look at things from an altogether different standpoint, and measure them by other measures. Try to put yourself in the place of Lazarus after he had been raised from the dead, and imagine, if you can, with what eyes he would behold the world and the things of it; and you will perhaps get a glimpse of the meaning of this resurrection life. Things once all-important to him, must have lost their value, and things once insignificant, must have become of mighty import.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."—Eph. 2:4–6.

The place from which we look, makes all the difference in the aspect of things. The resurrection life seats us in "heavenly places," and we look from these *down* upon earthly things, and not *up* from earthly places upon heavenly things. We are to walk through this world as those whose "heart and brain move there," while our feet perforce stay here.

Our "views" are simply what we *see*, and not necessarily what really *is*. A man at the foot of the mountain, and a man on the summit, may both look in the same direction, but their "views" would be widely different.

"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of

the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."—John 17: 14–16.

Notice the "even as" in this passage, and connect it with the "like as" and "even so" of our foundation text. We are "not of the world" in the sense that we belong to a spiritual race whose home is in a higher sphere, and who go through this world only as pilgrims and strangers. We belong to the heavenly order, not the earthly; and our sphere of true living is not on the material plane, but on the spiritual. As some one has said, "We are encamped in nature, but not domesticated."

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."—Col. 3: 1–3.

"For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."—Heb. 13: 14.

We say of some men that they "grovel," and we mean that their souls dwell on earthly levels, and are interested only in earthly things. Of others we say that they "soar" far above their fellows, and we mean that their souls dwell in upper regions, and their affections are set on heavenly things. The resurrection life soars. It mounts on eagle's wings into the divine region of "the life hid with Christ in God."

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."—Phil. 3: 20.

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Our "conversation," or, as some translate it, "citizenship," is not here but in heaven. Heaven means simply the spiritual sphere of things; and to have our citizenship there means, that our real home and our real interests, and possessions, and rights are all in this sphere.

"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."—Eph. 2: 6.

"Now therefore ye also are no more strangers, and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."—Eph. 2: 19.

To be "fellow citizens with the saints," and members of the "household of God," means to live in the resurrection life.

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city."—Heb. 11: 13–16.

We "seek a country." Or in other words we are a *developing* race. It is not a *place* we are seeking, but a *condition*; that is, a new nature and a new sphere of life. As has been well said, "God is gradually developing higher forms of life out of lower; the intellectual and the spiritual out of the animal and the sensuous. There are two men in the Bible, the flesh man and the spirit man, the man of the without and the man of the within; man as

an animal, and man as a spiritual being, and the last is being evolved out of the first."

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."—2 Cor. 4: 16.

"That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man."—Eph. 3: 16.

The resurrection life of which we are speaking, is the life of this "inner man." It is a life begotten of God, and therefore partaking of the very nature of God.

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."—2 Peter 1: 4.

We, who believe the promises, are "partakers of the divine nature;" but we are partakers of the lower nature as well. And it is the struggle between these two natures that causes our conflicts. It is in the process of development which is going on within us, that all our sin and suffering are evolved. Whenever the lower nature in us gains the supremacy, we sin, and consequently suffer.

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."—Gal. 5: 16, 17.

"For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I

would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."—Rom.7:15–25.

Our natural man, the flesh man, or as the Bible calls it, the "old man," can never fulfill the righteousness of God, for it is of the earth, earthy. With "the flesh" we must necessarily always serve the "law of sin."

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."—Rom. 8:5–8.

It is only the spiritual man, the man born of God, the resurrection man, who can "mind the things of the Spirit;" and in fact it is only such who can even *understand* God and His ways.

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he

may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ."—1 Cor. 2:11–16.

The one essential thing therefore for each one of us is to have this spiritual man, this resurrection life, born in us. Nothing avails but this. The tiger cannot understand the "things of a man" because it has not the "spirit of man" within it; and likewise we cannot understand the "things of God" unless we possess the spirit of God.

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."—Gal. 6:15.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."—John 3:3–7.

The new birth is a necessity in the very nature of things, for in order to enter any plane of life we must be born into it. No amount of effort can turn a tiger into a man, and no amount of effort can turn the flesh man into the spirit man. That which is born of the flesh *is* flesh, and always must be.

"But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."—Rom. 8:9.

The salvation revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, goes far deeper than the mere outward commands, "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not,"

which are all addressed only to that which is "born of the flesh," i. e., the natural or carnal man. The salvation of God gives man a new nature, one "born of the Spirit," that is so true and right in its very issues, as to live right outwardly without any law, from its own essential nature. The resurrection life works, not "after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life."

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."—Rom. 8:2–4.

It is the inward "law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" that sets us free from sin; and not the outward law of ordinances. Commandments are not needed when the inward life is right.

"But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."—Gal. 5:18.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? * * * * For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid."—Rom. 6:1, 2, 14, 15.

If a man is a thief at heart, no laws or penalties can keep him from stealing; but if a man is honest at heart, not even laws and penalties could make him steal. And this is the secret of the resurrection life. It cannot sin, because it is born of God.

"Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."—1 John 3:6–10.

"If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him."—1 John 2:29.

This does not mean that it is impossible for a child of God to sin, but only that it is impossible for that nature in him which is born of God, to sin. Many Christians are yet to a great degree "carnal and walk as men."

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"—1 Cor. 3:1–4.

"Babes in Christ" have the spiritual life begotten in them, but it is not yet dominant, and they are still more or less under the control of the carnal mind. Judged by the marks Paul gives in this passage of what the carnal mind consists in, it would seem as though not many Christians had developed out of this stage as yet!

But we *may* develop, we are meant to develop; only we do not always understand the way. We think to do it by a greater stringency of legal

efforts, by stricter rules and more searching commandments. But God's way is by faith.

"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."—Gal. 3:23–25.

The law acts as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, but it is powerless to carry us any further, and it is only by faith that we can enter into or live the resurrection life.

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain?"—Gal. 3:1–4.

The resurrection life is a matter of faith and development. We trust God for it, and He develops it in us.

How do people get delivered from the foolishness of childhood? Not by being commanded to give it up, but by growing out of it. When I was a child, I used to think that grown-up people wanted to play as much as I did, only there was a law against it. I thought this law came into effect at a certain age, and I pitied all the people who had reached this age, and dreaded growing old myself, because the sad time was drawing nearer for me. But when I had reached maturity,

I found there was no law needed, for the desire to play was gone; I had outgrown childish things.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."—1 Cor. 13:11.

And just so it is in this resurrection life. Our souls at first dread to enter upon it, because we are afraid of its demands. We want to keep our play-things, and our childish amusements. But as the divine life is developed, and the soul becomes more and more mature, it finds that the "childish things" drop off of themselves. The resurrection life "puts them away," not because it *must*, but because it *wants* to, because it has outgrown them.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."—2 Cor. 5:17.

This is all true to faith. But we must make it true in experience also; and here comes the struggle.

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. * * * * Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Rom. 6:6, 11.

"But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."—Eph. 4:20–24.

We must "reckon" ourselves to be dead and alive again, by faith, on the authority of God's word, which declares that we are. We must "put

off" the old man by faith, and "put on" the new man by faith also. And then we are to make this practical, by dying continually to the self-life, and by living only and always in the resurrection life. We must say with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" and we must then act this out practically whenever the occasion arises. Our faith "reckons" it, and the Lord enables us to make it real.

The faith that you can sail to England in ten days, and that if you only buy your ticket, all else is arranged for you, is a very different thing from the actual experience of the voyage itself. And in like manner, the faith, that in Christ you are already dead and risen, is a very different thing from the daily experience of "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh." The one is a *step* of faith, the other is a *life* of faith. The one may be momentary, the other must be life-long.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."—John 12:24, 25.

There is no other way. The corn of wheat must abide forever alone in itself, unless it die; and the soul must also. To "abide alone" in this sense means the awful solitude of the self-life, shut up to self, bounded and limited by self.

What solitude could be more awful! But "if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." The resurrection life is abundant in fruit.

Joseph is a wonderful type of this resurrection life. It is a life which, from the first, dreams of victory and dominion over the things of time and sense; but which can only attain to this dominion through suffering. In a dream God revealed Joseph's future kingship to him.

"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed. For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said unto him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words."—Gen. 37:5–8.

His brethren hated him and called him a "dreamer." And souls that have had a sight of this resurrection life, and venture to speak of it, will often be hated also and called "mystics," and "dreamers;" and perhaps not even their brethren in the church will understand them.

"And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh."—Gen. 37:19.

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."—John 15:18–20.

"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated

them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."—John 17:14.

Joseph's exaltation and victory were sure to come, for God had declared it; but the road to them was by the way of trial, and suffering, and loss. It led through the pit, and through slavery, and through imprisonment in Egypt.

"And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it."—Gen. 37:24.

"Then there passed by Midianites, merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt."—Gen. 37:28.

"And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison."—Gen. 39:20.

Through emptying to fullness, through abasement to exaltation, is always the way in this resurrection life. This is a necessity in the very nature of things.

If the butterfly life is to be born, the caterpillar life must die. The flesh-man must be put to death, if the spirit-man is to live. This is the explanation of the trial and suffering and loss that come to us all, as we advance in the divine life.

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."—Matt. 10: 39.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."—Luke 9: 24.

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."—Gal. 5: 24.

Through all its trials, the resurrection life reigns triumphant. It conquers by yielding, and

reigns by serving. Joseph was a king, even in slavery or in prison.

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house, for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not aught he had, save the, bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favored."—Gen. 39:2–6.

"But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison, And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all. the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper."—Gen. 39: 21–23.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. * * * Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. * * * Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."—Matt. 5: 3, 5, 10, 11, 12.

"But Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."—Mark 10: 42–45.

Joseph's exaltation came at last, and the only road which could have brought him there, was

through the very trials that had seemed as if they must crush him. God was in them all, and made out of each a chariot to carry him onward.

"And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."—Gen. 41: 38–44.

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."—Gen. 45: 4–8.

"God sent me." Yes, through these very trials and apparent losses, God was leading His child onward to the fulfillment of His early dreams. And the soul now, that bows itself meekly to the yoke of trial and misunderstanding, and holds a steadfast faith through all, will find at last, as Joseph did, that these very trials have been God's chariots which have borne it in triumph

to its longed-for exaltations. "If we suffer with Christ we shall also reign with Him."

"But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified."—1 Pet. 4: 13, 14.

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation."—2 Cor. 1:5–7.

The soul that suffers shall also reign. The things of time and sense shall be put under our feet, and we shall walk in the power of the resurrection life, as conquerors, through the very places where before we have been slaves and prisoners.

"And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."—Gen. 41: 51, 52.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."—Rom. 8: 35–37.

It is only the resurrection life that can be "more than conqueror" in a world like this. And who would not willingly and gladly lose his own self-life in order to find such an all conquering life as this.

Consent then to die. Do not seek to improve or make more beautiful the caterpillar life, for no amount of beauty or improvement can turn the caterpillar into the butterfly. The transition can only come through death. Let the old self-life die then, that the new and risen life, that life which is hid with Christ in God, may have free scope to grow and develop. For thus and thus only shall you be able practically and triumphantly to walk as Christ walked, in "newness of life."

BIBLE READING.

XVII.

SUBJECT—GOD'S WORKMANSHIP.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."—Eph. 2: 10.*

To be "God's workmanship" means that God is our Maker, and that He will make us into the thing that will please Him, if we do not take ourselves out His forming hands.

"Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture."—Ps. 100: 3.

"Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments."—Ps. 119: 73.

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."—Ps. 139: 14-16.

It takes us a great while to learn that God is really our Maker, and not we ourselves; and a large part of the perplexities of our spiritual experience arise from this ignorance. We are continually taking ourselves out of the hands of our Divine

Maker by our efforts to make, or remake, or unmake ourselves. The Potter desires to fashion us into a beautiful vessel unto His honor, but we will not hold still and let Him work. We interfere with His processes, either by resisting Him, or by trying to help Him, and so the vessel is "marred in the hands of the Potter."

"Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."—Jer. 18: 3-6

If we realize that we are God's workmanship and not our own, we will lie still in His hands, and will abandon ourselves to His working without a care.

"But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."—Isa. 64: 8.

God's workmanship, where He has His own way unhindered, must be like Himself, perfect. And therefore He can command us in our weakness to be perfect because He is our Maker, and He knows that His purpose is to make us perfect. We are to be made into something that will be to His glory.

"He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He."—Deut. 32: 4.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—Matt. 5: 48.

"This people have I formed for myself: they shall shew forth my praise."—Isa. 43: 21.

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light:"—1 Pet. 2: 9.

The glory of a man is shown forth in his work, and the glory of God must shine forth in the "works of His hands." A good workman cannot produce poor workmanship. Therefore, if we will only abandon ourselves to God's working, He will without fail "create us unto good works."

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved. * * * * That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ."—Eph. 1: 3–6, 12.

This was His purpose in our creation at first, for we were to be made in His "own image."

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: * * * * * So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him: male and female created He them."—Gen. 1: 26, 27.

Of course this did not mean a likeness of person or body, but a likeness of character and nature; that is, we are "to be perfect as He is perfect," i. e. in the same sort of perfection, not as to degree of course, but as to quality. We cannot see God to know what we are to be like; but we see Him incarnated in Christ, who is declared to be

the "express image" of God; and thus we can look upon and consider the image to which we are to be conformed.

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren."—Rom. 8: 29.

Since Christ was the "express image" of God, and we are to be conformed to the "image of Christ," we can see how the Divine purpose in our creation is to be brought about.

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds: and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him:"—Col. 3: 9, 10.

"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."—Eph. 4: 23, 24.

To make us then in His "own image," is therefore the object of God's workmanship, and nothing short of this will accomplish His divine purpose in our creation.

We can never understand a complicated machine until we know what was the purpose of the maker in regard to it. How did he mean it to work; what was it intended to accomplish; how has he arranged for it to run? When we walk through an exhibition of machinery we ask continually, as we stop to look at one machine after another, What is this for? and, What is that for? We are sure, if we see a machine, that the maker intended it to accomplish some especial end; and we cannot imagine any man being so stupid as to

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make a machine that is not meant to accomplish anything.

Our Divine Maker therefore has made us for something. And it is essential for us to find out what this is before we can expect to accomplish it. What then are we made to be, and what are we to do?

"Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him: yea, I have made him."—Isa. 43: 7.

We are made then to bring glory to our Maker by perfectly fulfilling His purposes in our creation.

A machine that fails to fulfill the purposes of its maker, does not bring honor, but dishonor, upon him. And we who fail in fulfilling the purposes of our Creator, are bringing dishonor upon Him. What then is this purpose?

"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:"—Ps. 8: 5, 6.

He has made us to "have dominion." We are to be "kings." We are to sit on the throne with Christ, and reign with Him over the things of time and sense. We are to conquer the world, instead of being conquered by it. We are to know what it is to be made "always to triumph" through Christ. If we fail in this victory; if, instead of our having dominion over sin, sin has "dominion" over us, if the world and the things of it master us and bring us into bondage we are not fulfilling the

purposes of our Creator, and are therefore bringing disgrace upon His name.

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:"—Eph. 3: 9, 11.

If the "manifold wisdom of God" is to be shown forth in us and by us to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, we must try to discover how it can be accomplished. We ask of a complicated machine, How does it go? And we mean, how do its different parts move in reference to one another, and what is the power that keeps them in motion. If a machine "goes" the way its maker meant it to go, it will move easily and without friction. And we can only have easy and frictionless lives, if our inward machinery moves according to the divine plan. My hand was made to shut inward on my palm, and it shuts that way easily and without friction. But if I try to shut it outward over on its back, I cannot do it without breaking something. My heart was made to love and serve its Creator, and when I do this, all my inward machinery moves without friction or jar. But if I love and serve the creature more than the Creator, all goes wrong, and something is sure to break.

A great deal of the friction and failure in our

spiritual lives arise from this fact, that we do not "go" as God meant us to.

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."—Phil. 2: 12, 13.

This does not say work *for* your salvation, but work *out* the salvation which God is working *in* you. We try to work things according to our own wills, not according to His will, and the result is as if an ignorant man should undertake to work a complicated machine after his own notions, instead of following the directions of its maker.

"Whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily."—Col. 1: 29.

Our "striving" must be "according to His working" or it will amount to nothing.

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power."—Eph. 1: 18, 19.

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God: strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."—Col. 1:10. 11.

Every machine of man's making is intended to "go" by some definite sort of power. Some are hand-power machines; some are horse-power; some are steam-power. In every case the machine is made for its own power, and will not "go" right for any other.

We are made to go by Holy Ghost power, and we cannot go right without it.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."—Acts 1: 8.

If we try to work ourselves by our own power we shall utterly fail, for we have no natural powers that can control spiritual forces. Only the powers that belong to the spiritual nature can have dominion over these.

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early; to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He giveth His beloved sleep."—Ps. 127: 2.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."—John 15: 4-6.

In order then to be what we were intended by our Maker to be, and to "go" as we were intended by Him to go, we must recognize the fact that we are His workmanship, and must abandon ourselves to His working.

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation."—Acts 17: 24-26.

"Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is

God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."—2 Cor. 5: 5.

"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul."—Acts 19: 11.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."—Heb. 13: 20, 21.

There is nothing more plainly told us in the Bible than just this fact, that we are God's workmanship, and that whatever true or acceptable work we do must be by His "working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight." And yet plainly as this is taught, there is scarcely anything we practically believe less.

We use the words, "The Lord my Maker," over and over, but they convey no clear idea to our minds; and we go on trying to make ourselves, working at our own interior life, and exhausting ourselves in efforts to transform our characters into a likeness to Christ. We try to "create" ourselves to good works, and are in despair at our continual failures.

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—Rom. 7: 22-24.

When however we recognize the fact that God is really our Maker, not only in the outward creation but in the inward as well; and further

when we see that He is also our re-Creator in redemption, we shall be forced to realize that He is therefore the only one who can understand how to work us, and who can remake us when we mar His work. If our watches are out of order, we do not meddle with them ourselves, but we take them to a man who makes watches, and who therefore knows how to remake them. And similarly must we do in our own case. If we are out of order we must take ourselves to the One who made us, and leave ourselves in His hands to be remade according to His divine plan.

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."—Rom. 12: 1, 2.

What we need is to be "transformed," and none but the Lord can do this. Our only hope therefore is in letting Him have His own way with us, by abandoning ourselves utterly to Him to be put in order, as a watch is abandoned to the watchmaker. We do not understand the watchmaker's processes with our watches, and it may well be that we shall not understand the Lord's processes with ourselves.

"As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all." Eccl. 11: 5.

"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say unto him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or

thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth? Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded."—Isa. 45: 9-12.

"O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? * * * * For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."—Rom. 11: 33, 34, 36.

Since we will all acknowledge that His ways are truly "past finding out," we must be content to leave the management of ourselves in His hands, and must believe that His "making processes" with us are the very best that could be, even though they may seem to us very mysterious or painful.

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of Spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."—Heb. 12: 5–11.

The trial which is so hard to bear is one of

God's blessed making processes, without which thy soul would never have known its fullest glory.

"But thou art making me; I thank thee, Sire.
What thou hast done and doest, thou knowest well;
And I will help thee: gently in thy fire
I will lie burning; on thy potter's wheel
I will whirl patient, though my brain should reel;
Thy grace shall be enough my grief to quell,
And growing beauty shine through suffering dire.
Too eager I must not be to understand.
How should the work the Master goes about
Fit the vague sketch my compasses have planned?
I am His house, for Him to go in and out;
He builds me now, and if I cannot see
At any time what He is doing with me
'Tis that He makes the house for me too grand."

The wondrous end of God's making is, that we are to bear His own image, and who can marvel if the process by which this is to be accomplished may be sometimes hard and painful.

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—2 Cor. 4: 16, 17.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."—2 Cor. 3:18.

We have only to watch the making processes which all beautiful works of art require to bring them to perfection, in order to comprehend the reason of our trials.

"'Tis that I am not good, that is enough,
I pry no farther; that is not the way.
Here, oh my Potter, is thy making stuff!
Set thy wheel going; let it whirl and play.
The chips in me, the stones, the straw, the sand,
Cast them out with fine separating hand,
And make a vessel of thy yielding clay."

There is infinite comfort and rest of soul in the fact that we are God's workmanship and not our own; for it gives us an unanswerable claim upon Him.

"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands."—Ps. 138: 8.

"Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again? Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit."—Job 10: 8–12.

The responsibility of creatorship is absolute. It is recognized all the world over in the responsibilities of parents for their children whom they have brought into existence. He who brings a being into existence is bound, we instinctively feel, to care for that being in the very best way possible.

"Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave."—Job. 10: 18, 19.

Our God Himself recognizes this responsibility of creatorship.

"Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me."—Isa. 44: 21.

"Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am He; and even to hoary hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."—Isa. 46: 3, 4.

"Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob,

my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."—Isa. 44: 2, 3.

"Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."—1 Pet. 4: 19.

He is called our "faithful Creator" and because He is faithful we are urged to commit the keeping of our souls to Him, for he Himself has declared "I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."

We used to be frightened sometimes at the words "Remember thy Creator," as though they were the demand to something awful and alarming. But now we see that we could not "remember" a more blessed, or lovely, or restful fact. For our Creator is also our Saviour.

"Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am He: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God. Yea, before the day was I am He; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?"—Isa. 43: 10–13.

"But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth, and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is none else. * * * * They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there

is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."—Isa. 45: 17-22.

God made, and He will remake. We were His workmanship in creation, and we are His workmanship in redemption. And He takes pleasure in His own work.

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."—Rev. 4: 11.

"For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation."—Ps. 149: 4.

"The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy."—Ps. 147: 11.

It is a universal instinct to "take pleasure" in anything we create. How we look at it, and turn it round to view it on every side, and walk off to see it at a distance, and delight to show it to those who will appreciate it and share our pleasure.

"And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold it was very good."—Gen. 1: 31.

When we look on man as he is now, and when we hear the groans and cries of creation, we wonder that God could call His work "very good." But in redemption we behold the consummation of this work which in creation was only begun, and see God's ultimate purpose for man carried out, and the excellence of His work manifested.

To illustrate. we have the declaration that man is "made to have dominion," but in Hebrews we are told that this is not yet seen; "but now we see not yet all things put under Him. But we see Jesus."

"Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet. For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him. But now we see not yet all things put under Him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."—Heb. 2: 8–11.

Jesus therefore is the Head of the new redeemed spiritual race who are to fulfill God's purposes in creation, just as Adam was the head of the present imperfect earthly race. And as we have borne the image of the one, so are we to bear finally the image of the other.

"And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."—1 Cor. 15: 45–49.

This, then, as we have seen, is the ultimate purpose of God's workmanship, to "conform us to the image" of His Son, to "create us in Christ Jesus unto good works." And He alone is able to accomplish such a mighty transformation. Let us then take our own hands off of ourselves, and put ourselves unreservedly into the hands of the Lord, believing that, although *we* are not able, *He* is able: and that nothing is too hard for His almighty power.

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."—2 Cor. 9: 8.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."—Eph. 3: 20, 21.

Nothing can give more utter rest of soul than this. If we are "God's workmanship," and if He is making us, we cannot find any room for fear or anxiety. No matter how bad we may feel ourselves to be, no matter how grievously out of order our inward machinery may seem, if God has us in His workshop and if He is at work on us, how can we have a care as to the result?

Moreover if we are God's workmanship we may be very sure of His abiding presence with us; for a man who is making anything must necessarily be close to it all the time he is at work on it. "What can there be so close as making and made?" Therefore, while God's blessed processes are going on, we cannot have a doubt or a question as to His continual presence with us.

God's part then is to work, and our part is to abandon ourselves utterly to His working, and to see to it that we do not hinder Him by disobedience or doubt. He has undertaken to "create us in Christ Jesus unto good works," and we must yield ourselves up submissively to His blessed making processes, and must be content with the

way of His working. We must yield, and trust, and obey without wavering, let come what may; and we must never be discouraged because we do not see ourselves perfect all at once. "The Maker hath not done" yet, but He will assuredly perfect that which concerns us at last.

"'Tis, shall thy will be done for me? or mine,
And I be made a thing not after thine,
My own, and full of paltriest pretense?
Shall I be born of God, or of mere man?
Be made like Christ, or on some other plan?
What though thy work in me transcends my sense,
Too fine, too high, for me to understand,
I trust entirely. On, Lord, with thy labor grand!
I have not knowledge, wisdom, insight, thought,
Nor understanding, fit to justify
Thee in thy work, O Perfect. Thou hast brought
Me up to this; and lo! what thou hast wrought
I cannot call it good. But I can cry
"O enemy, the Maker hath not done;
One day thou shalt behold, and from the sight will run."

BIBLE READINGS.

XVIII.

SUBJECT—THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

"Thus doth thy hospitable greatness lie
Outside us like a boundless sea;
We cannot lose ourselves where all is home,
Nor drift away from thee."

FOUNDATION TEXT.—"*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.*—Ps. 139: 7–10.

The all pervading presence of God with us is the one absolutely certain and unchangeable thing amid all that is so doubtful and changeable in this world of ours. And yet very few people realize this. Even christians will cry out for the Lord to "come" to them, as though he had gone off on a journey or were in the remote realms of space. "How can I get into His presence?" they ask with eager longing; when all the while they are already in His presence, and cannot by any possibility get out of it, not even if they "make their bed in hell," or if they "dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth." "Even there,"

wherever it may be, shall His hand hold and lead them.

"And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden."—Gen. 3: 8.

At this early period of human history we find that the Lord was present with the man and woman whom He had made. And from this time onward all through the ages, He is seen to be in continual daily and familiar intercourse with His people.

In Exodus He commanded them to make Him a "sanctuary that He might dwell among them."

"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them."—Exod. 25: 8.

"And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God."—Exod. 29: 45, 46.

We are told that He "walked" with them in the wilderness.

"For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that He see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee."—Deut. 23 :14.

"And it came to pass that night, that the word of the Lord came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle."—2 Sam. 7: 4–6.

When they took up their abode in the promised

land, He commanded them to build an house for His name.

"Now it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. But the Lord said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart: notwithstanding, thou shalt not build the house; but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name. * * * * * But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!"—2 Chron, 6: 7, 8, 9, 18.

When this house was finished, He took up His abode in it, that He might dwell in the midst of His people continually, as their ever present neighbor and friend.

"And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord. So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord. Then spake Solomon, The Lord said that He would dwell in thick darkness. I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever."—1 Kings 8: 10–13.

"And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually."—2 Chron· 7: 12–16.

"Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord,

because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house." —2 Chron. 7: 1, 2.

Through all the back-sliding of the children of Israel, and through all their rebellions, He remained with them, and never ceased urging them to trust fully in Him, and to abandon the whole management of their lives to His care.

"In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old."—Isa. 63: 9.

"And I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee, and have made thee a name like the name of the great men that are in the earth."—1 Chron. 17: 8.

And finally, in Christ, God came down in bodily form, and walked and lived among us, a man like unto us, taking upon Himself our nature and sharing our common lot. His very name, "God with us," tells us the whole wonderful story, that God, our Creator is not a distant God dwelling in unapproachable mystery, but is near at hand to every one of us, closer to us even than we are to ourselves, for "in Him we live and move and have our being."

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring."—Acts 17: 27, 28.

In Christ, God linked Himself on to humanity openly and forever, and thus revealed to us the fact of His abiding presence with humanity

always and everywhere; so that we must never think of a single human being as apart from Him.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth."—John 1: 14.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."—Heb. 2: 14–17.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—Phil. 2: 5–8.

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."—1 Tim. 3: 16.

This then is a settled fact that cannot be questioned, that God *is* with us always, nearer to us than we are to ourselves, no matter whether we are conscious of His presence or not.

"Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and spirit with spirit may meet;
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

"For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb."—Ps. 139: 13.

Human language could not express a greater nearness than this; and to doubt it, is to doubt the whole revelation of the Bible.

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations."—Ps. 90: 1.

Since God has been our dwelling place in all generations, we surely must not begin to question or doubt it now. We will therefore consider next what this fact is to mean practically in our daily lives.

It means I am sure far more of inward rest and peace than most people believe to be possible in this world of care and trouble.

We all know the rest that comes, even in the midst of trouble, from the presence of a tried and trusted friend. We say of such a one sometimes, "She is a tower of strength to me;" and we express in these words the same thought humanly applied, which contains a divine application when we say of the Lord that He is our "strong tower" to whom we may continually resort.

"I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."—Ps. 18: 1, 2.

"From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings."—Ps. 61: 2–4.

God's abiding presence with us means the solution of every difficulty of our lives. The mother's presence with the child solves all the child's difficulties; just her simple presence, without need of any especial promises or assurances. "Oh,

there is my mother!" the little troubled child will exclaim, and at the sight of her coming, all the childish burdens will drop off and vanish.

"And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."—Exod. 33: 14.

How often in our childhood, when we have been afraid to go somewhere or to do something, have our mothers comforted us with saying, "I will be with thee;" and how often has God stilled all the fears of His people by the same simple announcement, "Certainly, I will be with thee."

"And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And He said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."—Exod. 3: 11, 12.

"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. * * * * * Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."—Josh. 1: 5, 9.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."—Matt. 28: 18–20.

We cannot doubt that all these reiterated assurances of His presence with His people, under all their varying circumstances and conditions, *must* be meant to assure us, that, because He is thus with us, we may be also sure that all He has of

wisdom or of power are at our disposal, and are engaged on our behalf. No good mother *could* be present with her child, and fail to use all her resources in that child's behalf; her mother-heart would make it impossible. And the heart of God towards us makes it far more impossible for Him to be present with us and fail to help us in every need.

"Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord."—Jer. 1: 6–8.

"I am with thee to deliver thee; this is the express object of my being with thee, this is just what I am for; therefore be not afraid." Two little girls were once talking together over their dolls, when one began to tell the other of her fright in the dark. "Oh," replied the other eagerly, "I do not see how you *can* be afraid when God is always taking care of us." "But," said the first, "I don't believe God does take care of such teensy tinesy girls as us." "Why, Mollie," exclaimed her little friend in surprise, "don't you know that that is just what God is for!"

"But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord; and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid. For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee, because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord."—Jer. 39: 17, 18.

It is a sad fact that in spite of these reiterated

assertions of our Lord's, only a few of His people really believe in His abiding presence. They will all perhaps *say* they do, but when it comes down to their real belief, behind their words, it is manifest that it is nothing more than a pious sentiment, and has no practical reality whatever to their souls. Else, why the fear and trouble of heart that render so many christian lives miserable? To the soul that believes in His presence as a *literal fact*, there can never be anything but joyous triumph or peaceful calm. That soul *has God*, and it knows that God is sufficient. His simple presence is a certain assurance of all possible care and help.

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord."—Zech. 2:10.

His presence is enough for our joy, let what else come or go. We have all of us known loved ones in our lives, whose mere presence brought with it always utter content. A prison would have been a palace with that one's presence in it; and without that one, nothing had any joy.

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places."—Hab. 3: 17–19.

Madame Guyon expresses it as follows:

"All scenes alike engaging prove
To souls impressed with sacred love;

Where'er they dwell, they dwell in thee,
In Heaven, in earth, or on the sea.
To me remains nor place, nor time,
My country is in every clime;
I can be calm and free from care,
On any shore, since God is there.
While place we seek or place we shun
The soul finds happiness in none;
But with my God to guide the way
'Tis equal joy to go or stay.
Could I be cast where thou wert not,
That were indeed a dreadful lot;
But regions none remote I call,
Secure of finding God in all."

"Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not save him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."—Jer. 23: 24.

He who "fills heaven and earth" must surely be in the places He fills; even though we may not see Him or feel Him there.

"If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."—Ps. 139: 11, 12.

"The darkness hideth not from thee." We all know this must be a fact, in the very nature of things; and yet when the soul finds itself in spiritual darkness, it seems impossible to believe that it can be true. The fever of delirium may hide the mother from the child, and her heart may be wrung by its piteous cries for her coming, but the child's blindness does not drive away the mother nor make her ears deaf to its cries. And just so the delirium of our doubts or despair, or even of our sins, while it hides Him from us, so that we call

out in anguish for His presence, can never hide us from Him, for the "darkness and the light are both alike to Him."

If our faith will but grasp this fact as a reality, our "seasons of darkness" will not trouble us, for we shall be sure all the while, although we can not see Him nor feel Him, that He is still there close at hand for our need, a "very present" help in all our trouble.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."—Ps. 46: 1-3.

"Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shall guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."—Ps. 73:23-26.

"Flesh and heart may fail," but the ever present God still holds us by our right hand, even though we may not realize it, and is our all sufficient portion for ever.

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation."—Ps. 68: 18. 19.

"From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings."—Ps. 61: 2-4.

Neither can any backsliding take us out of His

presence. No matter how far away our souls may seem to wander, though it should be to the "uttermost parts of the sea," yet "even there" we shall always find Him with us, prepared to "load us with benefits" the moment we are ready to receive them.

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men."—Ps. 107: 1-8.

I am sure we all *would* praise Him instinctively and without effort for His wonderful works, if we would only believe in their reality. And I want us therefore to see Him as this ever present God, always close at hand to hear and to help, let us have wandered where we may.

But some may ask whether there is not such a thing as "coming into" His presence and "leaving" it, being nearer or further off from Him. To this I answer that these are only figures of speech which express spiritual states on our part, and not any divine facts on His part. I may be seated close to a person in the outward, and yet be in spirit separated from that person thousands

of miles, as to any real nearness. And when we speak of nearness or distance as regards God, it is only as to our spirits, not as to the facts. He is always near us, but we are not always near Him. In fact He is never far enough off even to be spoken of as near. He "possesses our reins," and if we only knew the facts of the case, it would be as impossible for us to think of ourselves apart from Him, as to think of ourselves apart from ourselves.

I feel sure our modes of speech in regard to this subject have led us into great darkness. We pray, "O Lord, do thou come!" When we ought to pray, "O Lord, make us come!" The "coming" is altogether in our spirits, not in His presence.

"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever."—Ps. 125: 2.

How *are* the mountains round about Jerusalem? Are they there to day, and gone to-morrow? Are they there in sunshine, but do they forsake Jerusalem when it storms? Are they there when all eyes see them, but gone when night makes them invisible?

You exclaim, "What foolish questions!" But if the "as" and "so" in this verse are true, and if the Lord really is round about His people *as* the mountains are round about Jerusalem, the things many Christians think and say are far more

foolish. Did none of you ever think in time of trouble and darkness that the Lord had forsaken you?

Suppose the dwellers in Jerusalem had acted toward their mountains as some of you act toward your God, what would you have thought of them? Suppose they had said on sunshiny days, "Now we believe the mountains are really round about us, because we can see them." And then on stormy days had said, "Alas! our mountains must have forsaken us, for we cannot see them any longer!

It is an unchangeable fact that the mountains *are* round about Jerusalem, whether any one sees them or not; and it is equally an unchangeable fact that God *is* always round about us "from henceforth even for ever," whether we see and feel Him or not.

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."—Ps. 34: 7.

"God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early."—Ps. 46: 5.

Since, therefore, God encampeth round about us, and is in our midst, since in short, He is our continual environment, we must not *allow* ourselves to be moved, for it would bring dishonor on his power or willingness to save. Nothing can harm the child in the mother's presence, unless the mother is first disabled. And since our God cannot be disabled, nothing can hurt or destroy

us in His presence. In fact nothing can withstand the mighty, all conquering power of His presence. Mountains, and oceans, and rocks, and deserts, in the spiritual realms of life, melt and vanish when He appears.

"The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth."—Ps. 97: 5.

"The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel."—Ps. 68: 8.

"Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters."—Ps. 114: 7, 8.

Neither men nor devils can harm the soul that abides in His presence.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."—Heb. 13: 5, 6.

"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."—Ps. 31: 19, 20.

The "secret of His presence" is a secret *open* to all, but not *opened* to every one. Nature was an open secret before all men in Newton's day, but it was *opened* to Newton only. The soul that has discovered this secret of God's presence has entered into a "pavilion" where nothing can ever disturb its rest, for nothing disturbing can find the "hidden" soul.

"Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me."—Ps. 139: 5.

Have you ever thought of what it means to be "beset" by God? We understand what it is to be so "beset" sometimes by unwelcome and disagreeable people as not to be able to get rid of them, let us rebuff them as we may. If God "besets" us then, it must mean that He is so close to us in love and care, that no indifference nor even rebuffs on our part can force Him to leave us.

Moreover He besets us "behind," that is He goes after us to set straight the things we have made crooked, and to undo the mistakes and failures that lie behind us. Mothers do this for their children all their lives long, beginning with picking up the scattered toys in the nursery, and going "behind" them as they grow older to undo and atone for all their mistakes. When a troubled, frightened child tells its mother of its wrong doings, and asks her sympathy and help, how ready is the mother's ear to listen and her heart to devise ways of help. Suppose the trouble *has* been all the child's fault, none the less is the mother willing and eager to help it. And none the less is God willing and eager to help us, even though our troubles come from our own fault.

If therefore we have in our past any mistake or sin which is a present source of distress to us,

let us commit it with confidence to the God who is "behind" us, sure that He will make all things, even these very failures, to "work together for good" for ourselves and others, if we will but trust Him.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."—Rom. 8: 28.

"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.' —Joel 2: 25–27.

Not only peace however, but holiness also, will be the result of God's recognized presence.

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."—2 Cor. 6: 16.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."—1 Cor. 3: 16, 17.

"Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever."—Ps. 93: 5.

The presence of God will drive out sin, as sunshine drives out darkness, if the heart will but open itself to His shining.

"This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."—1 John 1: 5–7.

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."—1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.

To be the "temple of God" means to be His dwelling place, or, as we have it expressed in Eph. 2: 22, the "habitation of God." It is almost impossible for the heart of man to conceive of anything so amazing, but if we believe the Bible at all, we *must* believe that it is most blessedly true that our hearts are the home of our God, and that He does continually seek to find a dwelling place there.

"For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."—Ps. 132: 13, 14.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."—Rev. 3:20.

Like the sunlight which fills the air all around us, and enters wherever there is an opening, so does the presence of God fill the whole universe around us, and enters every heart that opens to receive Him.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."—John 14: 23.

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."—1 Cor. 7: 1.

The Lord's dwelling place must be clean from all "filthiness of the flesh and spirit," in the very

nature of things; and every soul that recognizes the blessed fact of His abiding presence will find itself stirred up to get rid of all that is contrary to His will.

'Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, He hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing."—Zeph. 3:14–17.

How then shall we come into personal and practical recognition of this blessed fact that "the Lord encampeth round about us and is in our midst?"

A few extracts from a quaint little book called "The Practice of the Presence of God," written by an old monk of the 17th century, will teach us the road to this glorious consummation.

"We must establish ourselves in a sense of God's presence by a continual secret conversation with Him, in freedom and simplicity. We must consider God as always with us, and as abiding in us; and must keep ourselves in His presence by a silent and secret conversation with Him, thinking of Him the oftenest we can. A little lifting up of the heart suffices; a little remembrance of Him, a single act of inward worship, even in the midst of business· these are the methods by which

the heart comes to realize His abiding presence."

"Let us think of Him, then, the most we can; let us accustom ourselves by degrees to this small but holy exercise. Nobody perceives it; and nothing is easier than to repeat often in the day these little internal adorations. This exercise consists in short ejaculations offered to God, as for instance, "O Lord, here I am, all devoted to thee," or "Lord, I thank thee that thou art present with me;" or, "Lord, make me what thou wouldst have me to be;" or any other form of words that love may suggest. We must do this without effort or constraint, recalling our minds to God mildly and with tranquillity, as often as we find we are wandering from Him."

"He requires no great matters of us: a little remembrance of Him from time to time, a little adoration: sometimes to pray for His grace, sometimes to offer Him your sufferings, and sometimes to return Him thanks for the favors He has given you and still gives you; reminding yourself of Him the oftenest you can. Lift up your heart to Him whenever you are reminded of Him, even at your meals, and when you are in company. You need not cry very loud, for He can hear the most secret whisper in your soul."

"Use yourself by degrees to this little silent exercise, and you will at last form such a habit of

recognizing His abiding presence, that you will never lose the consciousness of it."

All this means simply this, that we "acknowledge God" in all our ways by saying over each moment of our life, "The Lord is here;" and by doing *whatsoever* we do to His glory.

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."—1 Cor. 10: 31.

"How have I erred! God is my home
And God Himself is here;
Why have I looked so far for Him
Who is nowhere but near?

For God is never so far off
As even to be near;
He is within; our spirit is
The home He holds most dear

To think of Him as by our side,
Is almost as untrue,
As to remove His throne beyond
Those starry skies of blue.

So, all the while I thought myself
Homeles, forlorn, and weary,
Missing my joy, I walked the earth
Myself God's sanctuary."

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BIBLE READINGS

XIX.

SUBJECT—THE "I" RELIGION, CONTRASTED WITH THE "NOT I" RELIGION.

FOUNDATION TEXT.—*"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."*—Gal. 2: 20.

"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." In all living there is one principal center around which the life revolves, and for the sake of which it acts. Generally this center is the "I" or self. Everything is calculated with reference to its influence on self; what gain or what improvement to one's personal standing or prospects will come from certain courses of action? How will it affect *me?* These are the continual under-lying questions. The Prodigal Son is an illustration of this.

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."—Luke 15: 17-19.

The son had no thought of the father's love or sorrow or longing; his only care was to get comfort and food for himself; and his expectations

could rise no higher than to be a servant in his father's household, where he would find "bread enough and to spare."

This is always the first selfish way of the human heart; we do not consider how our Heavenly Father loves us, and longs for us, and grieves over our wandering, and will rejoice at our return; but we ask what *we* shall get by returning, what personal gain will accrue to *us*, how much better off *we* shall be for giving in our allegiance to Christ. It is the "I" religion only, that we can comprehend at first.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."—Luke 15: 20–24.

In the father's embrace the "I" religion is swept away, and all thoughts of being a "hired servant, with bread enough and to spare," vanish before the "best robe," and the "fatted calf," and the merry feast of welcome over "the son who was lost and is found."

And sooner or later the child of God, if his spiritual life develops as it ought, comes to this place of insight, where thoughts of self vanish in the wondrous revelation of the Father's heart.

But the "I" religion is not lost all at once; nor is it confined only to the unenlightened sinner.

"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son, was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."—Luke 15: 25–32.

The "elder brother," who lived at home with the father, and shared all his possessions, thought only of himself at this supreme moment of the father's joy, and had no sympathy with it. He felt himself to be badly used, and declared that his rights had not been recognized, nor his true merits appreciated. "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and yet thou never did such things for me." Self was uppermost still in the heart of this son, who yet had been in one sense a good son, faithful in his father's service. But it was the "I" religion still. He could not forget himself.

There are some of God's children even now, who, like this "elder brother," in every emergency think of themselves first of all, and consider that their own rights and their own deserts ought

always to have the first claim, both inwardly and outwardly.

"And He said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. * * * * And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Him, and saith unto them, ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be the the servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."—Mark 10:36-45.

James and John were thinking of themselves. They wanted the highest places, and to be chief among their brethren, and they sought it by the way of the "I" religion. "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand and the other on thy left hand in thy glory.". Place, power, position, honor, glory, these are the considerations that move the soul in whom the "I" religion reigns. And such souls cannot even see that the only true honor and glory are to be found in the "not I" religion, where we become the "chiefest" by being the "servant of all."

"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth."—1 Cor. 10:24.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made

Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—Phil. 2: 3–8.

Paul knew both of these religions. While he was a Pharisee, he had been full of the "I" religion, and had made a great show in it. But when his eyes were opened to see the beauty of the "not I" religion, he counted all the other but dung in comparison with it.

"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church: touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."—Phil. 3: 4–9.

All that Paul had to say for himself, all that fine system of self-righteousness which he had upreared with so much pains, all that "confidence in the flesh," that earnest "zeal," that "blameless righteousness" of which he had been so justly proud, all in short of his "I" religion, vanished into thin air at the sight of Christ, and the excellency that was in Him. Paul's big "I," which before had filled his whole horizon, wilted down into nothing before the revelation of God in the

face of Jesus Christ. "Nevertheless I live," he cried, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." He had learned the lesson of the "not I" religion.

"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."—Job. 42: 5, 6.

The book of Job is the story of the "I" religion, and the process of its change into the "not I" religion. Job was a good man at first, but not at first a spiritual man.

"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. * * * * And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?"—Job. 1: 1, 8.

Even God pronounced him to be a "perfect and an upright man." And yet Job was full of himself, his own goodness, his own honor, his own benevolence, his own reputation. Read for instance the 29th chapter and count the personal pronouns used there, and you will see that they are used fifty-one times. It is all I, me, my, from beginning to end; while God is referred to only three times.

And is not this chapter a simple transcript of many chapters in the lives of some of God's most faithful servants, whose greatest delight is to dwell upon their own good deeds, or their own valuable possessions, and to recount them to

others? Have we any such chapters in the unwritten books of our autobiographies, dear readers? It may help us if we will mark a line with ink underneath each "I," "me" and "my" of this chapter, in Job, as a reminder of our similar chapters.

Contrast with these utterances of Job the words of David in the Psalms. Notice for instance the 118th Psalm.

Here the Lord is mentioned, with the pronouns He, His, Him and Thee and Thou, forty-six times: and all that is said concerning I, me and my, is simply set to forth my need and my distress, and to show how the Lord helped and delivered. In the twenty-nine verses of this Psalm, all but four tell of something good or great that the Lord does.

"Praise ye the Lord, O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever. Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can shew forth all His praise?"—Ps. 105: 1, 2.

"I will extol thee, my God, O King; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness."—Ps. 145: 1–7.

People are far more ready to "abundantly utter" the memory of their own great goodness than of God's. The book of Job is full of what I am. The book of Psalms is full of what God is.

Job expressed the feelings of a man who had great possessions. The Psalms express the feelings of a man who possessed nothing but the living God.

Contrast Job 1: 3 with Ps. 73: 25, 26.

"His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east"—Job. 1: 3.

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."—Ps. 73: 25, 26.

"The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."—Ps. 16: 5,6.

To have the Lord for our portion is a "heritage" far more "goodly" than any of the great possessions of earth, and confers upon the soul infinitely greater honor.

The "I" religion justifies itself. The "not I" religion justifies God. Contrast Job. 32: 1, 2 with Psalm 96.

"So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God."—Job. 32: 1, 2.

"O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; shew forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people. For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised: He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before Him: strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord

glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name: bring an offering, and come into His courts."—Ps. 96: 1–8.

Job was full of himself. The writer of the Psalms was full of the Lord. "Of thee, oh Lord, will I sing," is the language of the "not I" religion. "Of thee, oh myself, will I sing," is the language of the "I" religion.

Job had to suffer the loss of all things, and out of this loss have a revelation of God, before he could get rid of the "I" religion.

"Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said, Shall he that contendeth with the almighty instruct Him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it. Then Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further. Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said."—Job. 40: 1–6.

"Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."—Job. 42: 1–6.

God took away all his possessions, everything in which he delighted, or upon which he could rest; and then "out of the whirlwind" He answered Job with a revelation of Himself.

And just so is it sometimes now in the lives of God's children who have great possessions, whether inward or outward. Only "out of the whirlwind"

that has destroyed their possessions, can they have a revelation of God.

"The young man saith unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."—Matt. 19: 20–24.

To enter into the "kingdom of heaven," all dependence upon earthly riches, whether of money, or of reputation, or of good deeds, must be given up. The "poor in spirit" alone can enter here. "To gain the whole world," in any sense however subtle, is to lose one's soul in the same subtle sense.

"And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—Mark 8: 34–37.

There are some of God's own children who make great outward gains in things that minister to self, even in their religious lives; who have wonderful religious experiences, and do great religious works, and receive honor from all men; but who yet, in this gaining, have so degraded their finest impulses, and deadened their spiritual

life, as to bury their souls under a mountain of selfhood, until they have to all intents and purposes "lost their life."

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—Matt. 16: 24–26.

The "not I" religion is the religion that denies self, that says to this "I," "I am a stranger to you and do not wish to have anything to do with you." It denies self, not in the sense of making self miserable, of setting self on a pinnacle and sticking prongs into it to hurt it; but in the sense of utterly refusing to recognize its claims or even its existence, and of enthroning the Christ-life in its stead always and everywhere.

"And He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"—Luke 9: 23–25.

To "take up the cross" does not mean to make this "I" miserable, as is too often thought. It means to put this "I" to death, to crucify it; not to make it suffer but to kill it outright. It means to lose our own self-life truly and literally, and to have the Divine life, the life hid with Christ in God, to reign in its stead.

"Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. * * * * Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Rom. 6: 4, 11.

The only way out of the "I" religion into the "not I" religion is by the death of self. We must die that we may live.

We must cease to be alive to self, and must consent to be alive only to God. And this means practically that we literally are not to care how self is treated, nor what self gains, nor what becomes of self, but only how God is treated, and what brings gain and joy to Him. The trouble with all our religion is its tendency to selfishness. Its first and foremost thought is always for self; and this cannot but taint the whole character. If it is right to think of self first in the most sacred of all things, it cannot be wrong to think of self first in all minor things. We are continually seeking to save ourselves and to please ourselves.

"And they that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; Himself He cannot save."—Mark 15: 29–31.

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me."—Rom. 15: 1–3.

Christ "saved others, but Himself He could not,

save." Christ "pleased not Himself." And if we are living the Christ-life we shall know that we also are "not to please ourselves," nor to save ourselves, but are to save and to please others.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."—Gal. 6: 2.

Alas! how far we are from this Christ-like burden bearing. Our own burdens fill the whole horizon for us, and we can scarcely see, much less carry, the burdens of others. Indeed we often feel that, if every one had their rights, *our* burdens and *our* needs would be recognized by all around us as being of paramount importance to all other things.

We will move Heaven and earth in our efforts to save ourselves, and we will scarcely lift a finger to try to save or to please others. And this selfishness of our "I" religion taints our views of God. We are so selfish ourselves, that we are unable to give one single generous or unselfish attribute to Him, and we think He must be all the time looking out for His rights and His glory, just as we are for ours. We are actually afraid to trust Him to save us, because we know our own selfish unwillingness to save others. We think He is "altogether such a one" as we are. This is the "I" religion.

"Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother: thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou

done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."—Ps. 50:19–21.

Even christians "sit and speak," not of God's great goodness, but of their brother's great failures, and try to exalt themselves at their brother's expense. And naturally they transfer the same selfish characteristics to God, and think He also is entirely absorbed in the advancement of His own glory, no matter at whose expense it may have to be.

But the "not I" religion is just the opposite. It has handed self over bodily to death, and has ceased to be interested in it. It has forgotten self in its absorption in God. It expects nothing from self, but everything from God; and it demands nothing for self, but seeks to lavish all on the Lord.

"And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment."—Luke 7:36–38.

"And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little

is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."—Luke 7: 44–48.

The "not I" religion pours out its most precious gifts as a love offering upon its Lord, and asks for no return; but it receives most abundant and unexpected measure. This poor woman "which was a sinner" never dreamed that she deserved anything, but she found herself overwhelmed with blessing.

"And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."—Luke 18: 9–14.

This Pharisee had the "I" religion. "I thank thee that I am not as other men are." The Publican had nothing to say for himself, but that he was a needy sinner.

Some of the most religious people of the day are the greatest Pharisees; they have the most of the "I" religion. "I am altogether right," they say, "and you, if you differ from me, are altogether wrong. I ought to be put foremost, for I know the best. I am the one to have place and authority, for I am the best fitted to assume it. My

rights must be considered, for they are the most important." The "I" religion compels everything to come up to its own standard. The "not I" religion covers all things with a mantle of Christ-like love; it "suffers long and is kind;" it "envieth not;" "it vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up;" it "seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;" "it beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Such a one walks as Christ walked.

"He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked."—1 John 2: 6.

"For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not: but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously."—1 Pet. 2: 19–23.

The "not I" religion bears injustice, and misunderstanding, and lack of appreciation, and revilings, and snubbings, and being evil spoken against, and having its name cast out as evil, with patience, and even often with joy.

"And He lifted up His eyes on His disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in

heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. But woe unto you that are rich: for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

"But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye! for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."—Luke 6: 20–36.

If the Christ-life is the reigning life in us, we shall do the works of Christ. If the self-life is the reigning life, we will do the works of self.

Which sort of works is it that we do?

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."—Rom. 8: 1–5.

The "I" religion is the religion of the flesh. The "not I" religion is the religion of the Spirit.

It is very possible to "live after the flesh," even in a religious life. If we are seeking for the highest places or the greatest honor in our church work, or our benevolent societies, if we are standing up for our rights, if we are on the watch for affronts, and are keen to resent them, if we consider everything in its relation to ourselves, if we look out for our own interests first, if we provoke one another and envy one another; then, no matter how great may be our reputation for piety, we have never got beyond the "I" religion, and are in very truth "living after the flesh."

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory provoking one another, envying one another."—Gal. 5: 14–26.

To sum up the whole matter then, the choice is continually before us as to which form of religion

ours shall be. Shall it be I who live, or not I? Shall it be self or Christ?

This question confronts us at every moment of our living, and must be answered continually, either consciously or unconsciously. In each event that meets us, self clamors for recognition, and at each clamor it may be crucified and its claims ignored. Always and everywhere we may put off the old man of the "I" religion, and may put on the new man of the "not I" religion.

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."—Eph. 4: 22–24.

In all Christian experience there is a progress from the "I" religion to the "not I" religion. At first with all of us it is I and not Christ at all; then it becomes I *and* Christ; then it becomes Christ first and only a little of I. But has it come yet with any of us, as it had to Paul when he wrote the verse which is the foundation of our lesson, to be Christ only and not I at all?

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